

IARC CLASSIFIES RADIOFREQUENCY ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS AS POSSIBLY CARCINOGENIC TO HUMANS

Lyon, France, May 31, 2011 -- The WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as [possibly carcinogenic to humans \(Group 2B\)](#), based on an increased risk for [glioma](#), a malignant type of brain cancer¹, associated with wireless phone use.

Background

Over the last few years, there has been mounting concern about the possibility of adverse health effects resulting from exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields, such as those emitted by wireless communication devices. The number of mobile phone subscriptions is estimated at [5 billion globally](#).

From [May 24–31 2011, a Working Group of 31 scientists from 14 countries has been meeting at IARC in Lyon, France, to assess the potential carcinogenic hazards from exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields](#). These assessments will be published as Volume 102 of the IARC *Monographs*, which will be the fifth volume in this series to focus on physical agents, after [Volume 55](#) (Solar Radiation), [Volume 75](#) and [Volume 78](#) on ionizing radiation (X-rays, gamma-rays, neutrons, radio-nuclides), and [Volume 80 on non-ionizing radiation \(extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields\)](#).

The IARC Monograph Working Group discussed the possibility that these exposures might induce long-term health effects, in particular an increased risk for cancer. This has relevance for public health, particularly for users of mobile phones, as the number of users is large and growing, particularly among young adults and children.

The IARC Monograph Working Group discussed and evaluated the available literature on the following exposure categories involving radiofrequency electromagnetic fields:

- occupational exposures to radar and to microwaves;
- environmental exposures associated with transmission of signals for radio, television and wireless telecommunication; and
- personal exposures associated with the use of wireless telephones.

International experts shared the complex task of tackling the [exposure data](#), the [studies of cancer in humans](#), the [studies of cancer in experimental animals](#), and the [mechanistic and other relevant data](#).

¹ [237 913 new cases of brain cancers](#) (all types combined) occurred around the world in 2008 (gliomas represent 2/3 of these). Source: [Globocan 2008](#)