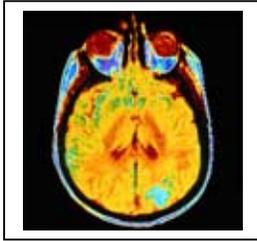


Brain Tumours: The Silent Killer

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Dr. Charlie Teo a pre-eminent neurosurgeon is at the cutting edge literally of a 21 per cent increase in children's brain tumours. He's curious about the effect mobile phones and Electro Magnetic Radiation [EMR] may be having on these statistics, and has issued a warning to parents to be aware.

So cautious is Dr Teo, the subject of his 12-year-old daughter having a mobile phone in their family, he confesses, is a sore point.

"The argument for her having a mobile phone was there are some benefits of it and that is in emergency situations, but she has promised me she is a very sensible girl she will use a loudspeaker facility all the time," he says.

Dr Teo has every right to be nervous; it is his personal belief that there may be an association between EMR and the development of brain cancer.

And while he is not seeking to be alarmist, he does want people to be more aware, especially with children.

It's a belief backed up by Senator Lyn Allison, who spent a year listening to the scientists to find out what the risks are. She discovered there is very good reason to worry.

"We're all a bit awash now in radio frequency and radio waves generally and we are not altogether sure what effect that has on us," she says.

Senator Allison says that the fact that brain tumour is now the number one life-threatening disease for children above leukaemia is consistent with studies in Europe and the UK.

"[These studies show] there has been a 40 per cent across-the-board increase in the number of brain tumours in the past 20 years," she explains, "now that 20 years has coincided with the use of mobile phone and many other radio frequencies..."

And the thickness of a person's skull, according to scientific studies read by Senator Allison, can also distinguish levels of vulnerability.

"Scientists say that the thickness of the skull in children makes a difference, it is quite thin compared with adults and there is more brain fluid which means that the radio frequencies can travel through the brain more easily," she says.

Dr Teo offers more specific evidence of patients whose tumours correspond with their use of mobile phones.

"When patients come in with a brain cancer, I often say to them, "your cancer was on the right side of the brain, it is in the area just above your ear, can you tell me if you feel that you have had more exposure than most people to mobile phones," and I am surprised that most people say, "yes I have used my phone continuously for the last seven years and it is always stuck to my ear on this side..." well that is where the cancer is.

Canberra parents Geoff and Denise O'Connell have had their own personal experience of these statistics. They lost their seven-year-old daughter Kessia to a brain tumour. Their own research has made them aware of the risks associated with exposure to EMR.

"I wouldn't move in next to a telecom tower or mobile phone tower and certainly if there were heavy duty electrical wires I would be very uncomfortable," says Geoff.