

CHE EMF Working Group Call Notes – September 20, 2006

Michael Lerner, Facilitator

Call participants: Nancy Evans, Milt Bowling, Marne Glaser, Katharina Gustavs, Libby Kelly, Cindy Sage, Louis Slesin, Lavinia Weissman

Consensus statement

Nancy Evans reported that we have 15 signatories on the EMF Working Group Consensus Statement and would welcome more. Since the Benevento Resolution (see below) was released on September 19, we agreed that it should be added to the list of international resolutions calling for a precautionary approach to the deployment of wireless technology. Cindy Sage suggested that we also add WI-MAX to the final sentence in the second paragraph. These two changes are reflected in the attached statement.

Because of the additional changes, Nancy will ask signatories to reconfirm their endorsement of the document by September 29 so we can release the statement the first week in October.

Any CHE partner who has not signed on to the statement and would like to do so should notify Nancy by September 29.

Benevento Resolution

Libby reported that this resolution was released online September 19 by the International Commission on Electromagnetic Safety. Signed by 31 leading scientists from around the globe, this resolution urges people to take sensible precautions against potential health risks related to exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF). It also calls for a full and independent review of the scientific evidence that points to hazards from current EMF exposure.

The Benevento Resolution can be viewed online at www.icems.eu

Moving forward

Michael Lerner reminded us that the EMF group has been meeting for two years and invited comments on what next steps would be useful. All agreed that the lack of public awareness and information on EMF issues is essential to shaping policy change to protect public health. How best to inform/education the public about the possible health effects of EMF, given that there is no single national organization working on the issue and no federal research program, remains a challenge.

An effective national organization/movement needs three types of actions: 1) Advocacy action to push legislation and assist local groups, 2) Legal action to see that legislation is enforced and litigate if necessary and 3) Science and policy action to track standards and corporate/political activity. Currently, EMF has no such organization or infrastructure for coordinated action.

Libby Kelley that EMF needs the sustainability that such an organization would provide, including lobbyists and policy analysts. With the exception of the International Association of Fire Fighters, no labor group or

environmental group has focused on EMF. The breast cancer community gives it little attention, nor does the Leukemia and Lymphoma Association devote any resources to it, even though the power line link to childhood leukemia is compelling. Nancy suggested that we should try to interest the National Brain Tumor Foundation in the issue and agreed to work on this.

Michael asked how we can seize the science and policy high ground with those organizations or networks with the most credibility. Do we need a map of EMF groups around the country and the world? We need an opening 2-page statement explaining the issues and the science and what options people have to reduce exposure.

Louis suggested that we need to have a narrow focus, whether it's cell phones and brain tumors or kids and power lines, which will catalyze grassroots concern. For example, we could do a campaign to drive people to use hands-free sets with cell phones. Such a campaign would have to galvanize public opinion—such as the one central fact that researchers are finding an increase of brain tumors after only 10 years of mobile phone use. This is a much shorter latency period between exposure and cancer diagnosis than occurs with most cancers, which usually take two to three decades to develop.

Michael said that to do a campaign, we would need a coordinating committee, a coordinator, and resources. Marne asked what the goals of the committee would be—to help other groups working on the issue? That remains to be decided.

Lavinia suggested that we propose a scientific session for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference. Nancy agreed to check out the deadlines and requirements for this as well as for the American Public Health Association (APHA). Presenting the science at these two meetings could gain media attention as well as educate health professionals on the need for policy change and additional research.

Cindy asked what CHE could do in addition to the presentations. Could CHE provide education and information, good connections between scientists and health affected and advocacy groups—in other words, be an information clearing house and facilitate the conversation on EMF issues? Michael said that this is what CHE does best.

Need for a Co-facilitator

Michael expressed a need to step back from co-facilitation of this group and asked that if anyone wants to be considered a candidate for this position to let him or Nancy know.

Next Call

We agreed that the next working group call would be Monday, October 30, at noon Pacific, 3 pm Eastern.