Mobiles may cause cancer, says study

Simon Adams
Correspondent

TERM use of mobile phones could cause cancer, government scientists have said after a major health review.

The study, published today, is by a Protection Agency group set up to examine the safety of mobile phones, network mast and Wi-Fi.

Researchers found "no convincing evidence" that the technology caused any health effects.

However, members of the Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (Agnir)

said they could not be sure of the long-term effects of mobiles, because there was "little information beyond 15 years from first exposure".

A few individual studies have found evidence of a link between heavy mobile phone use and increased brain tumour incidence. Most studies have found no such association though.

However, brain tumours can take decades to develop. Launching the report, which reviews hundreds of studies, Prof Anthony Sewardlow, the group chairman, said: "I think there's a need to keep a watch on national cancer trends in relation to this, particularly with brain tumours. So far brain tumour rates are not rising in the sorts of age groups who have had exposure for 10, 15 years."

"But if this is something that takes 15, 20 years or more to show up ... we need to keep watch over rates just in case."

The study found no evidence that Wi-Fi had harmful side-effects or could be detected by those who claimed to be sensitive to it.

Neither did it find any evidence that mobile phone mast transmitters caused health problems. However, the health agency is continuing to adopt a "precautionary approach" to mobile phone use, in particular advising that children avoid their "excessive use".

Dr John Cooper, director of the agency's Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, said: "There is still no convincing scientific evidence that radiofrequency fields from mobile phones and other radio technologies affect human health at exposure levels below internationally agreed guidelines."

"However, as this is a relatively new technology, the HPA will continue to advise a precautionary approach and keep the science under close review. Excessive use of mobile phones by children should be discouraged and mobile phone specific energy absorption rates values should be clearly marked in the phone sales literature."

Dr Simon Mann, a member of Agnir, said: "We continue to discourage non-essential use by children."

John Cooke, the executive director of the Mobile Operators Association, said: "The public will be reassured by this conclusion that there is still no convincing evidence that mobile phones cause adverse health effects."

Protect wildlife before it's too late, says Duke

Ron Rayner, Chief Reporter

Julie of Cambridge has warned that "a row will be too late" to save African elephants and big cats in a passionate appeal in her role as patron of a conservation charity.

Companied by the Duchess of Edinburgh at the London premiere of Cats, a nature film, the Duke said