

## Lennart Hardell - ein altbekannter Schummler?\*

A fairy tale by Alexander Lerchl and Mikko Paunio without scientific credibility

### A letter from Lennart Hardell

On 31 May 2011 the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) at WHO categorised the radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (RF-EMF) from mobile phones, and from other devices that emit similar non-ionising electromagnetic fields, as a Group 2B, i.e. a 'possible', human carcinogen. The IARC evaluation of the carcinogenic effect of RF-EMF on humans took place during a 24 – 31 May 2011 meeting at Lyon in France. The Working Group consisted of 30 scientists. The Hardell group studies on increased brain tumour risk associated with use of mobile and cordless phones were important bases for the decision.

I was one of the 30 experts invited to that panel. Alexander Lerchl was not invited. In a letter dated 26 October 2010 from Dr Baan, Responsible officer for *Volume 102* and Dr Cogliano, HEAD, IARC Monographs Section explained why. Reasons were 'your consultancy for the German Informationszentrum Mobilfunk (IZgMF)' and 'your participation would not contribute to a balanced search for consensus within the forthcoming Working Group. Given this and the fact that we had many more qualified applicants that we can invite for the meeting, our final decision remains unchanged.'

Lerchl has now posted on the Internet serious accusations against our research group regarding methods used in our cancer epidemiology studies. Debate on methods and results in science are of course always welcome but it should be based on facts and rigorous scrutinizing the published studies. This is not the case for Lerchl. I and my co-workers have published more than 300 scientific articles in pre-reviewed journals. So any debate is welcome as correspondence in these journals. It gives the possibility to rebut different statements in a scientific way. On the contrary, on the Internet anyone can state anything without scientific rigour, and that is precisely what Lerchl is doing: He promotes a junk debate.

The Hardell group's epidemiological studies are rigorously performed using validated scientific methods. For example in our case-control studies each questionnaire is assigned a unique id-number that does not reveal if it is a case or a control. All exposure (or no exposure) is validated, qualified and quantified by independent interviewers using a structured protocol and without knowing if it is a case or control. Coding of exposures for statistical analysis is also made without knowing if it is a case or a control. Several persons do this within the research team and the whole team has access to the whole database. These details have clearly been described in all publications.

Lerchl gives as source the SEPP web page: <http://www.sepp.org/twtwfiles/2002/Oct26.htm> with citation of Mikko Paunio in Finland. Paunio is a Senior Medical Officer of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and he says 'it is quite possible that this study, which is the mother of all dioxin cancer fears, is not just junk science but a fake.'

First, we have not performed just one but several epidemiological studies on dioxins and cancer. Second, his source is not credible. It is a 10-years old article in a Swedish newspaper, Svenska Dagbladet, by a journalist who built a "scoop" on house of cards. Overall the article gave the impression of fraud, however, in the last sentence of the article it is admitted: *Neither he [Lars Gunnar Larsson] or anyone else has claimed or been able to show that the answers have been manipulated, consequently that Lennart Hardell should have been fraudulent.*

In a letter to me, the source [Lars Gunnar Larsson, at that time retired for almost 20 years] of this "scoop", wrote after the publication of the article that 'I appealed to her not to write about this old story but it was hopeless.' Only a few hours before printing the article the journalist contacted me over the phone. Obviously she had already written her story and did not include my information. Any secret memory from the university claiming faked data does not exist.

SEPP is founded and run by just one person, S. Fred Singer, well known for his ties to certain industry interests as tobacco and oil companies. Mikko Paunio has several questions to answer, not the least being a Medical Officer. He has so far not answered these crucial questions:

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\* Lennart Hardell - a well-known fraudster?

Is the quote correct? When and in what circumstance did you meet Fred Singer? What is your relation to Fred Singer? Have you received funding for research or financial compensation from any industry involved in producing Hormoslyr® [the dioxin contaminated pesticide] or dioxin (forest industry, chemical industry, etc.)?

In summary, the Hardell group studies are correct. On the other hand, both Lerchl and Paunio have to explain their behavior, which is not in the interest of public health or the cancer victims. Their personal views are in sharp contrast to authoritative agencies like IARC, for example in their evaluation of carcinogenic risks to humans from dioxins and dibenzofurans, *IARC, Volume 69, 1997*: 'In summary, the epidemiological evidence from the most highly 2,3,7,8-TCDD-exposed populations studied produces strong evidence of increased risks for all cancers combined, ...The overall findings are unlikely to be due to chance...Higher relative risk estimates are present in some studies concerning non-Hodgkin lymphoma and soft-tissue sarcoma...' **Overall evaluation** '2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin is carcinogenic to humans (Group I).' This is exactly what the Hardell group studies had shown and was part of the IARC decision after careful evaluation by the scientific panel.

Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences in USA in their publication *Health Effects of Herbicides Used in Vietnam (National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. 1994)* made a similar evaluation: 'Although these studies [Hardell group] have been criticized, the committee feels that there is insufficient justification to discount the consistent pattern of elevated risks, and the clearly described and sound methods employed.' Furthermore, it should be noted that in the class settlement of the Agent Orange Litigation in 1984 the defendants (Dow Chemical *et al*) had full access to all underlying documents in the Hardell group studies. The defendant's lawyers and their allied experts would certainly have detected any scientific misconduct. This was not the case, however.

*For further reading:*

Hardell L, Walker M, Walhjalt B, Friedman LS, Richter ED. Secret ties to industry and conflicting interests in cancer research. *Am J Ind Med* 2007;50:227-233.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.20357/pdf>

Hardell L. Pesticides, soft-tissue sarcoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma – historical aspects on the precautionary principle in cancer prevention. *Acta Oncologica* 2008;47:347-354.

<http://informahealthcare.com/doi/full/10.1080/02841860701753697>

## Addendum

Exchange of mails between Alexander Lerchl (October 17, 2012) and Lennart Hardell (November 14, 2012) that speaks for itself:

Dear Dr. Hardell,

The Swedish information freedom act allows everyone to get official documents, as you know. I recently got the report by Lars-Gunnar Larsson from 2002 about the study you have conducted with ASF / Medifo. I will shortly publish this report in Swedish, English, and German. If you have any comments which I may add to the translated documents, I would be willing to consider them for inclusion.

Best regards,

Alexander Lerchl

## In response:

This 'report' does not exist as a University document. In spite of efforts it has not been found and does not exist. Larsson was in 2002 83 years old and retired since 1964. So if you want to write about some private writing you need to find the source of the writing and check if its accurate - I can easily see that it is not. You should definitely stick to 'Publication Ethics' which includes check of the truth of what you publish.

Regards,

Lennart Hardell