**EDITORIAL**

**Science Reporter**

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**MOBILE PHONE RADIATION**

**POTENTIAL OR EXAGGERATED RISK?**

Will radiation from your mobile phones fry your brains? Some studies say that the risk from mobile phone radiation is too exaggerated — we are exposed to much more radiation from several other sources daily, they say. There have, however, been studies that have warned of serious consequences of using mobile phones for long hours. Which study do you believe?

Not surprisingly, a recent study from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has discerned a pattern in the results of the studies. An analysis by researchers Prasad from the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Rohtak, and Kathuria, Nair, Kumar and Prof. Kameshwar Prasad from the Department of Neurology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi has found that government-funded studies show increased risk of brain tumour on long-term exposure to mobile phone radiation while industry-funded research tends to underestimate the risk.

The researchers have published their study in the journal *Neurological Sciences* (Mobile phone use and risk of brain tumours: a systematic review of association between study quality, source of funding, and research outcomes. Neurol Sci. Feb 17, 2017. doi: 10.1007/s10072-017-2850-8).

The researchers analysed results of 22 case-controlled studies conducted globally on 48,452 participants from 1966 to 2016 that reported the results for the risk of brain tumour. Of this, 10 were funded by government, seven had mixed funding from the phone industry, government and mobile manufacturers and three studies were solely funded by the phone industry.

The AIIMS study found that while government funded studies have a quality score of 7 or 8, all studies by phone industry and mixed sources have a score of 5 or 6. Further analysis showed that studies with higher quality score pointed towards a possibility of harm from overuse of mobile phones, while lower quality score studies show little risk. In fact, some industry-sponsored studies even go so far as propounding that mobile phone use can protect against brain tumour!

The AIIMS study found that while an estimate of government funded studies shows a 1.64 times increase in risk of brain tumour, mixed funded studies show a 1.05 times increase in the odds of risk of brain tumours. Although the association between mobile phone use and the risk of brain tumour is beset with controversies and still not conclusively settled, the AIIMS researchers caution people against non-essential use of mobile phones to reduce the risk of health hazards.

Well, mobile phones do emit radio waves, classified as “possibly carcinogenic” to humans by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). They might damage tissues most exposed to them. So, let’s err on the side of caution.

Hasan Jawaid Khan