
Press Release
New Mobile Phone Research Announced

The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research (MTHR) Programme has today announced that work has started on a new study to investigate whether the use of mobile phones is linked to long-term health effects such as brain cancer and neurodegenerative diseases. The study will involve monitoring the health of 200,000 mobile phone users over a number of years and will be carried out by a team from Imperial College working in collaboration with researchers in other European countries.

The study, which follows on from a successful pilot study carried out during the first phase of the MTHR Programme, will cost £3.1 million for the UK component. Funding is being provided jointly by the government and the mobile phone industry through an established firewall arrangement to ensure the independence of the research.

Commenting on the new study, the Chairman of the MTHR Programme Management Committee, Professor David Coggon said

“This study should add importantly to our understanding of whether there are significant long-term health risks from use of mobile phones. The parallel collection of similar data in several European countries will give added value.”

Although the totality of evidence from earlier studies does not indicate a risk of cancers of the brain and nervous system in the short- to medium-term, the widespread use of mobile phones is relatively recent and there is continuing uncertainty about the possibility of longer term risks. This is a gap in knowledge that the new study will seek to address. In addition, the study design lends itself to investigating whether there are risks for various other disorders including Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s Diseases, which have not previously been examined in relation to mobile phone use.

The cohort study of mobile phone users is the third study to be funded under the second phase of the MTHR Programme (MTHR2). The other studies are:

- A double-blind provocation study at King’s College London to investigate whether the TETRA radios used by the emergency services cause unpleasant symptoms such as headaches, dizziness and tingling;
- A double-blind provocation study at the University of Essex to investigate whether similar symptoms can be caused by exposure to emissions from TETRA base stations.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme was set up in response to the research recommendations contained within the 'Stewart Report'.

The Programme receives funding from a variety of government and industry sources.

To ensure the independence of the research carried out, scientific management of the programme was entrusted to an independent Programme Management Committee made up of independent experts, mostly senior university academics. Funds contributed by the sponsors of the Programme are managed on behalf of the Committee by the Department of Health as Secretariat to the Programme.

The first Chairman of the Programme Management Committee was Sir William Stewart and he was succeeded in November 2002 by Professor Lawrie Challis, Emeritus Professor of Physics at the University of Nottingham and formerly Vice-chairman of the Stewart Committee. Professor Coggon succeeded Professor Challis as Chairman in January 2008.

The Programme was set up in 2001 and supported 28 individual research projects during the first phase; most projects were undertaken in UK universities. Of these, 23 have now been completed and most have published results in peer-reviewed scientific and medical journals (27 papers to date, with more expected in the near future).

The progress of the programme so far is outlined in the MTHR Report 2007. This summarises the state of knowledge at the time of the Stewart Report and the current state of knowledge, taking account of both research supported by the Programme and that carried out elsewhere. It also provides an indication of future research priorities.

Details of all the projects supported by the Programme are published on its web site (<http://www.mthr.org.uk>).

The cohort study being announced is known as COSMOS (Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health).

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