

The BBC acted in a most inappropriate and rude manner by posting on-screen comments during Mr Tom Watson's Adjournment Debate in the House of Commons on 20th December 2010. These comments, some of which were factually incorrect, contradicted the valid concerns being expressed on behalf of the public by the two MPs. The adversarial comments were displayed to the nation while the MPs were actually speaking. This is an example of blatant lobbying by a news organisation. Tom Watson (Labour MP for West Bromwich East) and Bill Esterson (Labour MP for Sefton Central) who were raising serious and important questions about the safety of mobile phone use, especially by children, would not have been aware of the comments. The comments have been removed by the BBC from the version that is on the BBC i-player but no apology has been issued as of 10th January 2011.

If the BBC wants to challenge the views of MPs then it should do so a current affairs programme such as Newsnight using a balanced panel of experts. It is completely out of order for them to act as judge and jury and write on-screen comments during MP speeches. The BBC comments were repeated during the debate and the order in which they are shown below is mixed.



Mr Tom Watson
Labour MP for West Bromwich East
presents the case that the Government and industry could do far more to protect the public from any risk to health caused by mobile phone use.



Essex University only investigated short-term subjective effects following one 40 minute exposure to a mobile phone call. They tested healthy students and staff at the university.

This does not relate in any way to long-term use of a mobile phone. No one seriously suggests that one 40 minute phone call will make people ill.



Other researchers claim that the effects are caused by real physical stress from the phone signals. Stress and worry do affect people, and as people are worried about mobile phone masts there will be some effects which have a psychological origin.

However, stress effects from mobile phone related signals have been demonstrated in tomatoes, birds and animals, and it is difficult to see how those could be attributed to psychological factors.



The study actually concluded that there did not appear to be a increase in brain tumour risk from short term mobile phone usage and actually did find the beginnings of an association for more than ten years mobile phone use. There are discussions of this with scientific citations on the Powerwatch website.

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This refers to the INTERPHONE paper that we have discussed in the caption for the previous image.

See also Professor Lennart Hardell (et al) in the International Journal of Epidemiology: Int. J. Epidemiol. (2010) doi: 10.1093/ije/dyq246.



Not only do people claim it, but the few epidemiological studies there have been Internationally have found significant increases in these health effects from those living near mobile phone masts.

There have been no attempts to replicate these studies in the UK, and no explanation as to why, despite repeated requests for such UK studies.



The HPA would be wrong if they did state that - we suspect they do not. Indeed, they currently state that Base Station emissions "may impact adversely on well-being". There have been over ten peer-reviewed published scientific studies in other countries finding adverse health effects. Until the government and industry in the UK fund such studies we have to rely on reports from other countries.

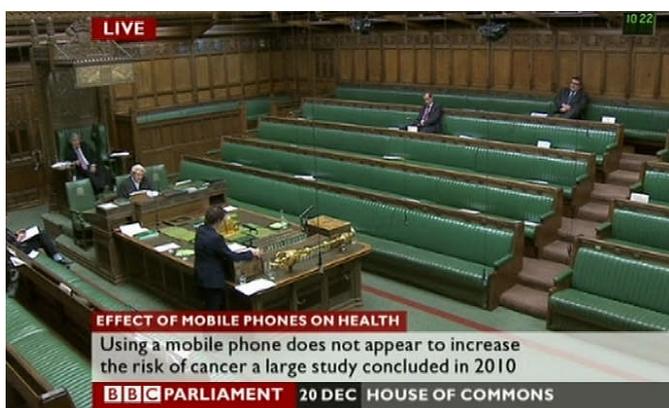


This is not a valid reason to assume there is actually no mechanism.

There is "no known mechanism" between a number of cancer causing agents and the cancers they are thought to be associated with. Despite this, several mechanisms have been suggested, with limited support, whereby mobile phone emissions could have an impact on tumour promotion.



No serious epidemiologist would expect to see a rise in the overall brain tumour incidence rate yet. It usually takes 20 and 40 years for a brain tumour to grow to a size and effect that it is diagnosed. As the main take up of mobile phone use was from the end of the 1990s, we would not expect to see a significant overall increase for many years yet. Even the most recent analysed data only looks at incidence rates up to 2008 or 2009.



This is a repeat of an earlier comment
The study actually concluded that there did not appear to be a increase in brain tumour risk from short term mobile phone usage and actually did find the beginnings of an association for more than ten years mobile phone use. There are discussions of this with scientific citations on the Powerwatch website.

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The above screenshots and brief response comments have been prepared and produced as a public service by Alasdair Philips, Director of Powerwatch, a small UK NGO, concerned about the need for proper and open democratic debate of these important issues.

There is much more discussion and hundreds of relevant scientific paper citations available on the Powerwatch website:

<http://www.powerwatch.org.uk>