

Disability: the court blames mobile phone use

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Today, for the first time, a Labour Tribunal recognized the occupational origin of the disease of a man who for ten years was a company executive in Brescia. He worked for long hours using a cell phone and a cordless phone. The man, Innocenzo Marcolini, 57, had a benign tumor on the trigeminal nerve. Surgery saved him but the consequences on his quality of life are terrible. He is partially compensated by this victory against INAIL (the Italian Labour Insurance) that recognizes the 80% of disability caused by his occupation.

This is the first time a judge has recognized the causal link and the subsequent declaration of disability due to occupational exposure to EMF irradiation.

The information on this court case comes from the biologist Angelo Levis, Professor of Mutagenesis at the University of Padua, an authority on the effects of EMFs on human health. He and Joseph Grasso, a neurosurgeon from Brescia, were called as expert witnesses for the plaintiff. He recounts that he was contacted three years ago by two people, one from Brescia and one from Cremona, who had very similar jobs to that of Mr Innocenzo Marcolini. They worked in customer services, and made extensive use of cordless and mobile phones. While writing with the right hand, they kept the telephone to the left ear.

The man from Cremona developed a malignant parotid tumour, while the man from Brescia had a benign tumour involving the trigeminal ganglion. In both cases the tumour developed on the left side of the head.

Levis says that he prepared his evidence using data from the scientific literature ("very alarming data, despite the optimistic surveys often financed by telephone companies") and his report was presented along with that of the neurosurgeon who described the various surgical procedures.

The expert witness nominated by the Court (as third party) recognized the validity of their report, and a few days ago the Court of Appeal finally recognized the causal connection.

The exact grounds of this decision are not yet known but they will be published in three weeks.

Moreover the Supreme Court will have to rule on the case (not on the facts, but on the legitimacy of the process). In any case what has happened in the Brescia Labour Tribunal is sensational. "Given the fact that there was no literature on the subject, the expert appointed by the Court has accepted the claims of the two expert witnesses asserting that it is plausible that there is a relationship between the illness suffered and EMF irradiation".

Professor Levis - who has founded a campaign group called Appelettrosmog ("apple/application electrosmog") - adds, **"Such cases are becoming more and more frequent, but few doctors are informed about these issues."**

The epidemiologist Valerio Gennaro from Genoa, who has enthusiastically welcomed the Brescia sentence, comments: **"Nowadays there are fewer and fewer of us epidemiologists. At the Institute of Genoa we are five, all on short-term contracts, as if this vital work of prevention was not important. It is clear that our job is not just to collect data but to interpret it and to understand why people get sick."**

Professor Levis adds that there are one million cases of brain tumours in the world every year. **"We calculate that it is a disease with ten years of latency, so only now we are beginning to get the first data on the consequences of certain habits. Very soon we will be faced with the effects of over-using a mobile phone on young people, such as those who had a mobile in their school satchel when they were eight years old."**

I fear these will be very serious."

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