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Waking up to the dangers of radiations

By Lyn McLean

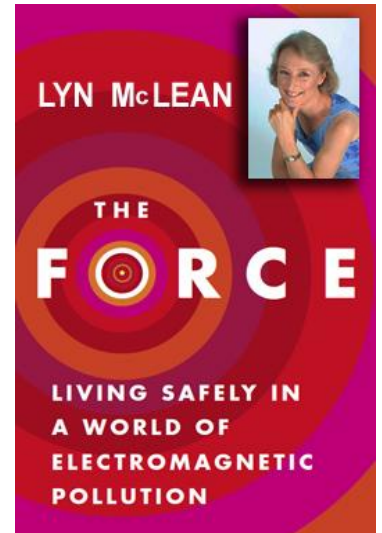
Would you be willing to take a drug that had not been trialed before its release on the market? Would you take the drug if manufacturers assured you that it was 'safe' on the basis that it did not cause shocks, excessive heat or flashes of light in the eye? What if others who'd taken it developed problems ranging from headaches to life-threatening diseases?

Finally, would you give it to your children to take?

As ridiculous as this scenario may sound, the truth is that most people receive potentially harmful exposures like this every day – not necessarily from a drug – but from a risk of an entirely different sort.

The risk is electromagnetic pollution – the invisible emissions from all things electric and electronic. It is emitted by power lines, household wiring, electrical appliances and equipment, computers, wireless networks, mobile and cordless phones, mobile phone base stations, TV and radio transmitters and so on.

As engineers compete to develop an ever-diversifying range of radiating technologies to seduce a generation of addicts, and thereby ensure a lucrative return, there is an implicit assumption that these technologies are safe. They comply with international standards, we are told. But there the illusion of safety ends.



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Sadly compliance with international standards is no more a guarantee of safety than being born rich is a guarantee of happiness.

For such standards protect only against a very few effects of radiation, and short-term effects at that (such as shocks, heating and flashes of light in the retina). They fail entirely to protect against the long-term effects of radiation which, of course, is the sort of radiation that you and I are exposed to if we use a mobile or cordless phone every day, live near a high voltage power line, use a wireless internet computer, or live under the umbrella of a mobile phone base station, TV or radio or satellite transmitter. In short, we're all exposed.

Regulating to protect only against some of the effects of radiation is a bureaucratic nonsense.

It's like regulating a car's airbags and not its brakes. It's like regulating the colour of a pill and not its contents. It's every bit as meaningless to public health protection.

Particularly when long-term exposure to electromagnetic radiation has been convincingly linked to problems such as leukemia, Alzheimer's disease, brain tumours, infertility, genetic damage and cancerous effects, headaches, depression, sleep problems, reduced libido, irritability and stress.

Short-term protection is a short-sighted approach to public health protection. It may guarantee safety of the politicians as far as the next election. It may guarantee protection of a manufacturer as far as its next annual profit statement. But it does not guarantee the safety of the users of this technology, particularly those children who are powerless to make appropriate choices about technology and manage their exposure, who are more vulnerable to its emissions **and who have a potential lifetime of exposure.**

History is replete with examples of innovations that seemed like a good idea at the time but which eventually caused innumerable problems – to users, to manufacturers and to the public purse. Tobacco, asbestos and lead are but a few.

The risk is that electromagnetic pollution is a public health disaster unfolding before our eyes. By failing to implement appropriate standards; by ignoring signs of risk from science; by failing to ensure addictive technologies are safe before they're released onto the market – our public health authorities have abrogated their responsibilities and chosen to play Russian roulette with our health.

It's a gamble that not everyone assumes willingly.