

## **Townsend Letter:**

### **Microwaves' role examined.**

Paul Doyon developed an array of health complaints within six months of moving to Fukuoka, Japan, from another area of Japan in November 2004. First, his sleep time decreased as he awoke earlier and earlier. Fatigue, night sweats, brain fog, difficulty concentrating, swollen lymph glands, anxiety, rapid weight loss, musculoskeletal pain, and skin rashes followed. Eventually, Doyon could no longer work as an English instructor at Kyushu University. Japanese specialists diagnosed him with autonomic nervous system disorder, the Japanese equivalent of CFS, according to Doyon.

Doyon noticed that he felt better in certain locations—places that had less electromagnetic pollution from cell phone towers and antennas. He also felt better at night when cell phone use declined in the city. He experienced anxiety attacks during peak cell phone use. Doyon began searching the Internet for connections between electromagnetic radiation and the symptoms he was experiencing. He lists 31 scientific observations that suggest a link between electromagnetic radiation (EMR) and CFS in a widely disseminated blog post: “Are Microwaves a/the Major Causal Factor in CFS/ME?” (The version I found did not include references. For referenced studies, go to “The Bioinitiative Report” at [www.BioInitiative.org](http://www.BioInitiative.org) or Arthur Firstenberg’s “Radio Wave Packet.”) EMR, for example, damages the mitochondria (the cells’ energy factories). It also disrupts the autonomic system by inhibiting norepinephrine production and by stimulating the adrenal glands’ production of adrenaline and cortisone. EMR also produces many symptoms that are clinical signs of CFS and/or fibromyalgia: sleep disorders, weakness, fatigue, headaches, musculoskeletal pain, and impaired memory.

Believing that electromagnetic radiation was an underlying cause of his ill health, Doyon moved to a house out of cell phone range in the mountains of Saga Prefecture, Japan. His recovery began, but any trips back to the city brought a resurgence of his former symptoms. Eventually, Doyon settled in a sustainable community in India that forbids cell phone towers on its property (20 square kilometers).

Doyon's blog report made me curious: had any scientists researched a possible link between CFS and electromagnetic radiation? I found a small 2002 pilot study from a group of Australian researchers. They measured EMR in the homes of 49 people with CFS or ongoing chronic fatigue, finding that 14 of the 49 were exposed to < 2 mG for prolonged periods. (The article does not explain why they chose 2 mG. Biological effects can occur at power density exposures that are infinitesimal, according to Firstenberg's "Radio Wave Packet.") Excessive radiation came from waterbed heaters, electric blankets, electrical currents on metal water pipes, power lines, a quartz halogen bedside light, the bed head's being placed near the meter box, a phone charger by the bed head, and an often-occupied chair positioned against a wall with high magnetic fields from kitchen appliances on the other side of the wall. Greater exposure to electromagnetic radiation did not correlate with worse symptoms: "There were no dose-response relationships." The researchers helped these people reduce their exposure but gave no advice to the remaining 35 study participants, who acted as a control group. Six months after initial contact with the participants, 55% of those who reduced their EMR exposure reported symptom improvement, compared with 14% in the control group.

The researchers were particularly surprised to find that 64% in the active group reported a "marked improvement in sleep quality," compared with just 12% in the control group. The Australian researchers refer to a 2001 study in which Dr. Scott Davis and colleagues concluded: "Exposure to night-time residential 60-Hz magnetic fields can depress the normal nocturnal rise in melatonin." EMR exposure may play a significant role in disturbed sleep among people with CFS—and the general population. More research is needed.

Doyon has been criticized for suggesting that EMR is the cause of CFS. He does not claim that it is the primary problem for every CFS patient. But EMR may be a significant factor for some people with CFS, just as EMR affects blood sugar levels in a subset of diabetics. (See Magda Havas's research on difficult-to-control diabetes in "Shorts: 'Dirty Electricity' Affects Blood Sugar," *Townsend Letter*, May 2009;310:24).

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