

CORA-Description of the SCENIHR-Report 2009

1. About

Source
SCENIHR (Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks). Health Effects of Exposure to EMF. 19 January 2009
Link
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/docs/scenihhr_o_022.pdf
Supporting information
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/documents/ev_20040907_rd01_en.pdf

2. Content and Mandate

Objectives
(i) update of previous opinion, i.e. (ii) critical evaluation and summary of the scientific knowledge from physical, engineering, medical and biological sciences relating to health risks associated with EMF exposure. (iii) Scientific health risk assessment advise to the European Commission for preparing policy and proposals relating to consumer safety and public health.
EMF spectrum covered
Static fields, extremely low frequency fields, intermediate frequency fields, radiofrequency fields
Status of report and authorship
Independent Scientific Committee
Funding
European Commission
Accountability
European Commission
Summary
Scientific evaluation of (peer-reviewed) research about biological effects of EMF and associated health risk assessments. Clear organisation and mandate: Independent expert group SCENIHR was requested by EC to update its 2007 opinion in light of newly published research

3. Authorship

Selection of Members
Standing members appoint external experts according to adopted rules of procedure that are required by Commission decision of March 2004
Composition (institutional)
3 SCENIHR members, 6 external experts
Composition (expertise)
Required: Radiation Biology, Epidemiology, Engineering/Dosimetry, Toxicology, Human Studies Missing in the group: Human Laboratory Research / Clinical Research
Impartiality
All members have to fill in a declaration of interest that is published. The rules of procedure include chapters on independence, transparency, confidentiality, and relations with stakeholders to assure impartiality
Disclosure
Full disclosure of names and of selection procedure
Summary
Members are appointed (no open call), official rules of procedure assure impartiality. Required expertise for the mandated task largely at hand and backed by own research of the group. The only missing expertise concerns clinical research / provocation studies.

4. Assessment Process

Literature search
Explained in a method section: papers 2007ff, peer-reviewed, in-vitro, in-vivo, human laboratory, epidemiology, exposure/dosimetry, mechanistic studies relating to EMF (0-300GHz)
Quality assurance
Yes; criteria relating to the quality (e.g. dosimetry, statistics, biases, etc.), but not to the outcome of the study (presence or absence of effects)
Weighing of evidence
Weighing of degree of evidence from across disciplines for specific endpoints was performed but not explained in the text. Obviously, it was done by communicative validation.
Consultation activities
No external consultations (other experts, stakeholders, general public)
Consensus finding
Yes. But no minority opinion present
Summary
Description of literature selection and evaluation points towards careful risk assessment, however, the weighting procedure is not explained / disclosed. No stakeholder participation. Under the SCENIHR rules of procedure stakeholder participation is allowed

5. Communication

Differentiation between biological and adverse health effects
Yes
Unbiased descriptions
Yes. The report evaluates all research outcomes of acceptable quality and identifies remaining uncertainties
Evidence-based conclusions
The "Abstract" and "Executive Summary" adequately reflect the analysed material and conclusions drawn by the committee.
Plain language summary
"Abstract" and "Executive Summary" of the report can be regarded as summaries for the general public. The executive summary is not free of technical jargon.
Unbiased summary
Yes
Summary
Balanced evaluation on the basis of available scientific evidence. No speculation about potential long-term effects if no data is available. Executive Summary, Opinion and Abstract adequately reflect the body of the report for both experts as well as non-specialists.