



Please note Dr. Stanwick's telephone number (250) 519-3406 and fax number (250) 519-3441

July 5, 2011

Ref: 12400

Tom Ferris
Chair
Board of Education
School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road
Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8

Dear Mr. Ferris:

Re: Wi-Fi in Schools

Thank you for your letter of June 23, 2011 regarding the possible harmful health effects of using Wi-Fi in schools. I have answered your concerns in the order we received them.

Does Wi-Fi in schools pose a health risk to our students and staff?

Wi-Fi exposures are a small fraction (less than 1%) of radiation received during typical cell phone use. There is no convincing evidence that Wi-Fi exposures constitute a threat to the health of B.C. residents.

A review of 46 blind and double blind studies concluded that despite the belief of sufferers of *electrosensitivity disorder* that their symptoms were triggered by exposure to electromagnetic fields, researchers were unable to confirm a connection between their symptoms and radiation exposure. Repeated experiments have been unable to replicate these phenomena under controlled conditions. While not questioning people's symptoms, there is considerable uncertainty in the medical profession as to their cause. (Source: www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/issues.html)

Do the cumulative effects of electromagnetic frequencies pose a health risk to our students and staff?

This would include the use of cell phones, portable phones, Wi-Fi and Smart Meters. On May 31, 2011 the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO/IARC) classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields – such as those emitted by cell phones – as “possibly carcinogenic to humans.”

This change was made based on the reported increased risk of a rare, malignant brain tumors associated with heavy long-term cell phone use.

Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

Suite 430 - 1900 Richmond Avenue, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8R 4R2

Our Vision: Healthy People, Healthy Island Communities, Seamless Service

While its classification by WHO/IARC as a 'possible' carcinogen means that the evidence is inadequate to classify mobile phone use as a 'known' or even a 'probable' carcinogen, the classification has understandably reignited concerns over the safety of cell phones and has resulted in calls for changes in regulations, the lowering of exposure levels, and the restriction of use by children.

Given that cell phones, Wi-Fi and Smart Meters all transmit information with radiofrequency waves, some members of the public have also argued that these devices, as well as baby monitors, and FM radios, which also use radiofrequency transmission, be curtailed or banned.

Dr. Perry Kendall, British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer, recognizes these concerns. Dr. Kendall and his colleagues across the country regularly review information and new science as it becomes available, and have established ongoing review mechanisms to ensure that new knowledge is assessed quickly.

Given the current scientific evidence, the consensus of public health practitioners is that at current exposure levels these electromagnetic fields do not constitute a threat to the health of the public. It is also important to note that there are a wide variety of everyday items which have been given the classification "possibly carcinogenic to humans" by the WHO/IARC, including coffee, pickled vegetables, and certain oral contraceptives. (Source: www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/issues.html)

How can we be provided with regular updates regarding potential health risks related to electromagnetic frequencies?

The possible association between mobile phone use and cancer risk, particularly among long-term heavy users of cell phones, does warrant further study – research is continuing and will be monitored. The latest recommendations can be found at the following web site: http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2011/pdfs/pr208_E.pdf

In addition, the BC Centre for Disease Control is conducting a further review of published studies and will be issuing a report in Fall 2011.

Yours sincerely,



Richard S. Stanwick, M.D., M.Sc., FRCPC, F.A.A.P.
Chief Medical Health Officer

c.c.: Board of Education
John Gaipman, Superintendent of Schools
George Ambeault, Secretary-Treasurer