

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER



IARC MONOGRAPHS ON THE EVALUATION OF CARCINOGENIC RISKS TO HUMANS

VOLUME 80

**NON-IONIZING RADIATION, PART 1:
STATIC AND EXTREMELY LOW-FREQUENCY
(ELF) ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS**

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*Non-Ionizing Radiation, Part 1:
Static and Extremely Low-Frequency
(ELF) Electric and Magnetic Fields*

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This publication represents the views and expert opinions
of an IARC Working Group on the
Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans,
which met in Lyon,

19–26 June 2001

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of ELF magnetic fields on various genetic end-points. Although increased DNA strand breaks have been reported in brain cells of exposed rodents, the results are inconclusive; most of the studies show no effects in mammalian cells exposed to magnetic fields alone at levels below 50 mT. However, extremely strong ELF magnetic fields have caused adverse genetic effects in some studies. In addition, several groups have reported that ELF magnetic fields enhance the effects of known DNA- and chromosome-damaging agents such as ionizing radiation.

The few animal studies on cancer-related non-genetic effects are inconclusive. Results on the effects on in-vitro cell proliferation and malignant transformation are inconsistent, but some studies suggest that ELF magnetic fields affect cell proliferation and modify cellular responses to other factors such as melatonin. An increase in apoptosis following exposure of various cell lines to ELF electric and magnetic fields has been reported in several studies with different exposure conditions. Numerous studies have investigated effects of ELF magnetic fields on cellular end-points associated with signal transduction, but the results are not consistent.

5.5 Evaluation

There is *limited evidence* in humans for the carcinogenicity of extremely low-frequency magnetic fields in relation to childhood leukaemia.

There is *inadequate evidence* in humans for the carcinogenicity of extremely low-frequency magnetic fields in relation to all other cancers.

There is *inadequate evidence* in humans for the carcinogenicity of static electric or magnetic fields and extremely low-frequency electric fields.

There is *inadequate evidence* in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of extremely low-frequency magnetic fields.

No data relevant to the carcinogenicity of static electric or magnetic fields and extremely low-frequency electric fields in experimental animals were available.

Overall evaluation

Extremely low-frequency magnetic fields are *possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)*.

Static electric and magnetic fields and extremely low-frequency electric fields are *not classifiable as to their carcinogenicity to humans (Group 3)*.