

Opening Statement
Dennis Kucinich, Chairman
Domestic Policy Subcommittee
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Hearing on “Tumors and Cell Phone Use: What the Science Says.”
September 25, 2008
2154 Rayburn HOB
11:00 A.M.

Cell phones have evolved from a clunky novelty to a sleek utility. They have become indispensable and, for many, inseparable from modern life. They are everywhere in America, Europe and some parts of Asia. While consumer demand for cell phones has grown, and as the technology has evolved to give consumers more options and faster connectivity, a vigorous debate has been taking place among scientists about whether long term use of cell phones causes tumors in the people who use them. Recently, that debate caught the public’s attention with the publication in July of a warning from a preeminent oncologist about the human health effects of cell phone use.

We are fortunate to have the author of that memorandum, as well as a distinguished group of individuals, as witnesses before this committee today. I regret that the CTIA, the association of the wireless telecommunications industry, declined our invitation to testify. By their refusal, I think they have denied Members of Congress and the public the benefit of their testimony and the opportunity to pose questions and hear answers. I hope that the wireless industry will reconsider their decision, should the Subcommittee determine it would be beneficial to hold further hearings on this matter. However, I am grateful to the minority of the Subcommittee for identifying another highly qualified expert from the National Cancer Institute. I am confident he will add immeasurably to the hearing. I am proud to say that this Subcommittee’s partnership and spirit of cooperation with the minority is the rule rather than the exception. I thank them for engaging in this hearing.

In exploring this topic, it is my belief that the complicated scientific questions should be left to the scientists. I challenge our witnesses today to answer the questions posed by Members of the Subcommittee clearly, and to challenge each other as well.

In typical public debates over potential links between an environmental exposure and a health problem, convention is that the message must be black and white. On one side, the charge is made -- explicit or implicit -- that there is no scientific doubt about a certain health effect from the exposure of concern.

On the other side, the relevant industry defends its product with the scientific assertion that, “there is no evidence that exposure to X causes health effect Y.”

Often, the reality – and the science – lies somewhere in between.

My hope is that we can improve the public's and Congress' understanding about the gray area in this scientific debate. Today, we will let the experts present the evidence, discuss the studies, and describe the limitations of what is known and what can be implied from the data we have. The question before us, then, is whether that evidence is sufficient to merit action by regulators and legislators to protect public health? What have other national government health authorities done to protect their people, based on the same scientific data? What should Congress or the Administration do, if anything, here in the United States?