

HIGH VOLTAGE POWER LINES & LEUKEMIA (1979-1993 Studies)

The Myth:

Overhead high voltage power lines and associated electromagnetic fields (EMFs) have not been shown to have any impacts on the occurrence of leukemia.

The Facts:

- The homes of children in Denver Colorado who developed leukemia tended to be found near electric power lines carrying high currents. A two to three-fold increase in the deaths of children living near high voltage power lines was discovered (Wertheimer and Leeper 1979). The finding was strongest for children who had spent their entire lives at the same address. Later studies to repeat this study have revealed similar results.
- A study of deaths in Los Angeles County found a marked increase in leukemia among electrical workers exposed to above-normal EMFs (Wright et al. 1982).
- A study of 486,000 male deaths in Washington State found a 2-fold increase in the expected normal occurrence of leukemia among workers exposed to above-normal EMFs, adding further support to the hypothesis that EMFs are carcinogenic (Milham 1982, 1985,). Later studies confirmed or obtained similar results (Savitz and Calle 1987, Milham 1997).
- A higher incidence of acute myeloid leukemia (bone marrow cancer) was found in electrical workers exposed to above-normal EMFs in England (Coggon et al. 1986).



Leukemia victim receiving chemotherapy.

- An increased incidence of leukemia was found in New Zealand electrical workers exposed to above-normal EMFs (Pearce et al. 1989).
- An analysis of the Finnish Cancer Registry revealed a higher risk among workers exposed to EMFs for leukemia (all types combined), bone marrow cancer and central nervous system tumors (Juutilainen et al. 1990).
- Results from a large, national population-based study of the Cancer Registry of Norway supported an association between electrical workers exposed to EMFs and the risk of leukemia and brain tumors (Tynes et al. 1992).
- The incidence of leukemia in children under the age of 16 who had lived within 300m of any 220kV and 400kV power line in Sweden was studied during the period 1960-1985 (Feychting and Ahlbom 1993). The risk was from 2.7 to 3.8 times the expected.



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