



cellphone usage of 10 years or more.

The head of the study said she backed fresh warnings, including restricting the use of cellphones by children.

The Interphone investigation by WHO, the public-health arm of the United Nations, involved research in 13 nations. Some 12,800 people were surveyed between 2000 and 2004, with tumour sufferers and healthy people interviewed to see if their cellphone usage patterns differed.

**The publication of the final paper, funded partially by the cellphone industry, has been delayed by friction among its authors over how the findings should be presented.**

Earlier studies on the impact of cellphone usage have not been conclusive. The Telegraph quoted a spokesman for Britain's Mobile Operators Association as noting that over 30 scientific reviews had found no adverse health effects,

while a spokesman for the country's Health Protection Agency stated that there was "no hard evidence at present" of a health hazard. However, he backed limiting "non-essential" use of cellphones by children.

The Telegraph report also cited an Israeli study which concluded that heavy cellphone users were 50 per cent more likely to come down with tumours of the parotid salivary gland.

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article continued from front page :

**US to probe phone-cancer link**

**Senator wants issue settled early, citing delay in reaching definitive conclusion on cigarettes**

**A FRESH inquiry has been**

**launched by the United States Senate into potential links between cellphone usage and cancer.**

**Warned powerful Senator Tom Harkin last month: "I'm reminded of this nation's experience with cigarettes.**

**A** MAJOR decade-long

study, overseen by the World Health Organization (WHO) and costing £20 million (S\$45.8 million), has found a link between heavy usage of cellphones and brain cancer.

The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported that a preliminary breakdown of the study's results, without being definitive, found a "significantly increased risk" of some brain tumours tied to

Decades passed between the first warnings about smoking tobacco and the final **definitive** conclusion that cigarettes cause lung cancer.”

The Iowa senator announced the start of a probe into the issue after being empowered to investigate health matters as chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

He took over from legendary Senator Edward Kennedy, who died of brain cancer.

France is already boosting cellphone-usage warnings. Mr Harkin said he was concerned no one has been able to prove that cellphones, which use **radio waves**, do not cause cancer. It is often argued – for instance by Dr Linda Erdreich of science and engineering firm Exponent – that “this part of the spectrum is known as nonionising radiation”.

She told a Senate hearing that this means radio waves cannot damage the DNA in cells. However, recent worries have been raised by the Environmental Working Group, an activist group, and epidemiologist **Devra Lee Davis** of the University of Pittsburgh, who says many

potential sources of cancer have been overlooked.

All who have warned of cellphone- related dangers will find **new ammunition in a soon-to be- released World Health Organisation (WHO) study, which found a link between heavy mobile- phone usage over 10 years and brain cancer.**

The Daily Telegraph reported that six of eight studies conducted as part of WHO’s Interphone probe found a heightened risk of glioma (the most common brain **tumour**) after 10 years of cellphone usage. One study recorded a startling 39 per cent spike. A link to acoustic neurinoma, a benign tumour of a nerve between the ear and the brain, was also found in two of seven studies. One, in Sweden, found the risk to be 3.9 times higher.

The Interphone authors say the study’s results are not definitive because of memory-related issues among some subjects. It focused on three types of brain cancer and a tumour of the **salivary gland**.

Detractors will suggest that

the study is methodologically flawed. Some findings suggest short-term cellphone usage protects against cancer – an unlikely result.

Others will say the study produced lower estimates on the risks of heavy usage because it included people who made just a call a week, and because children were not included among its respondents.

The results have now been submitted to a scholarly journal and should be published before the year is out.

Still, the head of the probe, Dr Elisabeth Cardis, is already on record as supporting fresh warnings. “In the light of a number of studies which, though limited, suggest a possible effect of radio- frequency radiation, precautions are important,” she was quoted as saying by the Telegraph.

“I am therefore globally in agreement with the idea of restricting the use (of cellphones) by children, though I would not go as far as banning mobile phones

as they can be a very important tool.”

Dr Cardis added that the use of hands-free phone kits and moderating phone usage would also be “interesting” measures.

– AGENCIES

Definitive: \_\_\_\_\_  
jue ding xing de

Radio waves: \_\_\_\_\_  
wu xian dian bo

Tumour: \_\_ zhǒng liu

Salivary gland: \_\_\_\_  
tuo ye xian

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