

Leading expert Anders Ahlbom linked to the Telecom Industry.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AT THE WHO

Professor Ahlbom, who is supposed to chair the expert group on epidemiology at the upcoming IARC evaluation of the carcinogenicity of mobile phone radiation, is the co-founder of “Gunnar Ahlbom AB” a Brussels-based lobby firm aiming to assist the telecom industry on EU regulations, public affairs and corporate communications.

Professor Ahlbom created the lobby firm in 2010 together with his brother and sister in law who live in Brussels. The brother, Gunnar Ahlbom, is a telecom lobbyist in Brussels since the early 90's, and was already active in this field in 1998 when Professor Ahlbom participated in the setting of the controversial ICNIRP standards on radiation from different sources of non ionizing radiation like wireless devices and cell towers.¹

- Anders Ahlbom's link to the Telecom Industry through his brother and their common company is a straight-forward explanation of his systematic denial of health risks, says Mona Nilsson, the Swedish author and investigation journalist who now reveals the affair.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and publishes Monographs to identify environmental factors that can increase the risk of human cancer. The preparation of the IARC Monographs on “*Non-Ionizing Radiation, Part II: Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields [includes mobile telephones]*” will start next week in Lyon, France (24-31 of May). The result of the review is of utmost importance to the Telecom industry, which is sending three observers to the meeting: Mays Swicord, CTIA (the wireless association), Joe Elder, the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and Jack Rowley, the GSM Association.²

The members of the IARC scientific committee have to submit a declaration of interest. Professor Ahlbom has not reported his involvement in the lobby firm, nor his close family relation to a mobile phone industry lobbyist (Gunnar Ahlbom/TeliaSonera).³

The IARC has already banned a scientist from the committee. Dr Alexander Lerchl from the German Radiation Protection Board, has been questioned regarding his relations to the German mobile industry, and was finally not accepted in the committee as “*an IARC Monograph is an exercise that demands complete independence from all commercial interests, and from advocates who might be perceived as advancing a pre-conceived position.*”⁴

“Industry-loyal scientists have seized the interpretation privilege”

The present revelation doesn't come as a surprise to Mona Nilsson who has been investigating Prof Ahlbom's statements and whereabouts for many years.

- The industry-loyal scientists are easy to recognize. They don't just report their findings, they systematically repeat a set of policy messages that counter the results of independent scientists and coincide with the interests of the industry. This is crystal clear in the case of Professor

¹ See Enclosure I: Background information.

² Preliminary list of participants: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/vol102-participants.pdf>

³ See Enclosure II: Anders Ahlbom interest declaration IARC

⁴ Letter from IARC to A. Lerchl www.diagnose-funk.ch/downloads/df_bp_who-lerchl_iarc-26oct10.pdf

Ahlbom, who has dismissed all studies indicating health risks or biological effects whenever he has chaired an expert panel on this subject. He even denies the results of his own research if it indicates a health risk.⁵ There is no doubt he speaks to the benefit of the industry.

Research and contact : Mona Nilsson, investigating journalist,
Author of the books "Mobiltelefonins häsorisker" (2010) and "Spelet om 3G" (2005)
Phone: 46-8-56051502
mona@monanilsson.se

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE LOBBY COMPANY Gunnar Ahlbom AB 556808-6374

Professor Anders Ahlbom from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden has a huge influence on evaluation on health risks from mobile phone radiation. His brother, Gunnar Ahlbom, is since the 90:ies a lobbyist in Brussels for the leading Swedish mobile phone operator TeliaSonera, among others. In 2010 the two brothers formed a consulting company, Gunnar Ahlbom AB, with address in Brussels.⁶

The company's mission is to: *"do consulting business in the areas of EU affairs, particularly regulations and specifically telecommunications, IT, environment- and energy regulations as well as medical techniques, support public affairs and corporate communications and trade with stocks"* The document on the company Gunnar Ahlbom AB from the Swedish Office for Registrations of Companies can be ordered in English:
<https://foretagsfakta.bolagsverket.se/fpl-dft-ext-web/produktInformation.seam?cid=15541>

For a confirmation on their identity call the Swedish TAX register +46 8 564 851 60.

Members of the board of Gunnar Ahlbom AB:

- * Ahlbom, Nils Anders (63 years) - 1947-03-11 STOCKHOLM
Board member – Active in 1 company Member 2010-08-31
- * Ahlbom, Lars Gunnar (59 years) - 1951-09-12 B-1200 BRYSSEL, BELGIEN
Board substitute - Active in 1 company 2010-08-31
- * Périou Ahlbom, Michelle Marie Member, chairman 2010-08-31
B-1200 BRYSSEL, BELGIEN

Authorised signatory: The firm is signed by the members of the board, each one independently

Auditor: Andreasson, Lars-Åke 640513-1639, 2010-08-31

⁵ See Enclosure I.

⁶ See Gunnar Ahlbom AB, <https://foretagsfakta.bolagsverket.se/fpl-dft-ext-web/produktInformation.seam?cid=15541>

GUNNAR AHLBOM – The brother

Gunnar Ahlbom lives since 1993 in Brussels where he has been working with EU related issues for telecommunications industry:

“Gunnar Ahlbom has a background from the telecommunications industry and works with EU-related issues in Brussels since 1993, for example regulations of telecommunications, regulations of medical equipment and with Research and Development cooperation issues. Since 2002 he helps SOS Alarm by monitoring issues related to 112”. (Swedish original text: ”Gunnar Ahlbom har en bakgrund från telesektorn och arbetar med EU-frågor i Bryssel sedan 1993, bl a med telereglering men också med reglering av medicinsk utrustning och med FoU-samarbeten. Sedan 2002 hjälper han SOS Alarm att bevaka frågor som rör 112”)⁷

In 1998 he was the Swedish mobile phone leading operator Telias ”country manager” and 1999 he was interviewed in the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet as a lobbyist for Telia in Brussels.⁸ In 2006 he was contracted by COCIR, a Brussels-based lobby organisation for the medical equipment industry, the telecommunication industry and so on. His brother Anders Ahlbom, was at the same time, 2006/2007 as a chair for the SCENIHR, and 2009 as a SCENIHR expert, evaluating health risks with telecommunications as well as medical equipment (MRI-equipment).

Anders Ahlbom has never mentioned his brother’s work as a lobbyist for the concerned industry in his declarations of interest. Neither has he mentioned their common interest in the Gunnar Ahlbom AB company (since 2010).

ANDERS AHLBOM

INFLUENCE

EU: Anders Ahlbom, professor in epidemiology at Karolinska the institute is Sweden's one leading and one of the most influential international experts on evaluation of health risks with mobile telephony. He led an important expert evaluation for the European Commission in 2007, called SCENIHR, ” Possible Effects of Electromagnetic Fields on humane Health^[5] and he participated in a new expert report (SCENIHR) to the European Commission in 2009.

He has chaired every single expert investigations about possible health risks with mobile telephony and electromagnetic fields been done in Sweden during 2003-2011, for the Swedish Radiation Protection Authority) and the Swedish Council for working life and Social Research (FAS).^{[11], [2]} When he refers to “other reviews” confirming his findings, he often pretends pluralism where there is not. The same can be said about other biased and highly influential scientists like Bernard Veyret in France.

⁷ Signalen nr 2/2009 page 33

<http://www.sosalarm.se/Documents/Nyheter%20och%20Media/Bibliotek/Tidningar/Signalen/Signalennr%20nr%202-09.pdf>

⁸ Aftonbladet 21 maj 1999 Svenska lobbyister satsar på EU-valet
<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/9905/21/eu.html>

Anders Ahlbom will chair the IARC epidemiology expert evaluation about cancer risks of mobile telephony during the end of May 2011 (24-31/5).^[3] The evaluation will serve as a guideline on cancer risk assessments of the mobile telephony for many years ahead.^[4] Anders Ahlbom has also been engaged as an “independent expert” by the WHO and the EU during the last decade.⁹

ICNIRP: Anders Ahlbom was a member of ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) 1998-2008. In 1998 he participated in elaborating the ICNIRP recommendations on radiation limits for mobile telephony. The ICNIRP recommendations were recommended by the EU one year later. They are of huge economic interest for the telecommunications industry. The guidelines are generous and permit an extensive exploitation of the technology. The industry has thus adapted its technology to the ICNIRP values and any lowering of the limits would have enormous economic consequences. Any lowering might also be seen as an indirect admittance of earlier products on the market presenting health risks. The ICNIRP recommendations have been criticised for being obsolete and the European Parliament has in a resolution asked the European Commission to review the scientific basis. *The ICNIRP standards do not take into consideration possible long term effects, as cancer for example*¹⁰. Professor Ahlbom is still loyal to the organisation, presently serving as a consulting expert.

The council of ethics of the Karolinska Institute where Ahlbom is employed, concluded in 2008, that the ICNIRP-membership might be considered a conflict of interest and that Anders Ahlbom should consequently disclose his relation to ICNIRP whenever he makes statements.¹¹

INTELLECTUAL BIAS: A PRE-CONCEIVED OPINION

There is evidence that Professor Ahlbom has a preconceived opinion about EMF radiation and health risks for a long time. The latest events suggest that he might have been consciously doing outcome-oriented research and reviews.

The last years he has repeatedly and firmly declared that there are no effects at exposure levels below the ICNIRP-guidelines, systematically ignoring or criticizing the entire body of research concluding there is a risk. Below you will find a few examples of Prof. Ahlbom's position:

1. In a recent interview published on the Swedish Council for working life and Social Research (FAS) website in February 2011, Ahlbom stated¹²:

“The probability that mobile phone radiation causes brain tumours is low”
Sannolikheten för att strålning från mobiltelefoner orsakar hjärntumörer är låg.

⁹ E.g. www.microwavenews.com: WHO EMF Meeting: WHO, ICNIRP and the US Military; April 2007; and EU EMF-NET 2nd workshop in Stresa, Italy, 2-4 May 2007 web: <http://web.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eis-emf/stresa2007.cfm>

¹⁰ ICNIRP guidelines 1998: see “Basis for limiting exposure” page 3
<http://www.icnirp.de/documents/emfgdl.pdf>

¹¹ <http://hudcancer.nu/Beslut.pdf>; Karolinska Institutet dnr 3753-2008-609

¹² Låg risk att mobilen orsakar hjärntumör, FAS, Feb 2011 <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarntumor/>

...”the reason why this research is conducted is not a biological founded hypothesis about health risks, but ...//... because there is a general apprehension regarding the effects of electromagnetic fields.”
Skälet till att den här forskningen bedrivs är inte en biologiskt grundad hypotes om hälsorisker, utan ...//.. att det finns en allmän oro om vad som händer när man utsätts för elektromagnetiska fält,

”We are now pretty sure that there is no relation [between mobile phone use and brain tumours], at least after 10-12 years of use. For longer use we still have limited data. *Där är vi nu rätt säkra på att det inte finns något samband, åtminstone inte efter 10–12 års användning. För längre tider än så finns begränsat med data.*

“Furthermore, there are areas that have not been studied, for example mobile phone use among children and youth. There is, however, no reason to believe that there are any risks there either”
Dessutom finns det områden som inte studerats ännu, till exempel när det gäller mobiltelefoni bland barn och ungdomar. Det finns dock inga skäl att tro att det föreligger några risker där heller,

...”I am very satisfied that we don’t find any risks”¹³ *Jag är väldigt nöjd med att vi inte hittar några risker*

2. In an interview in the Swedish Public Radio channel 1 on February 1st 2011, Anders Ahlbom declared:¹⁴

- “Interphone shows the same things as all other research studies so far, namely that there is nothing to be worried about”. *“Interphone visar samma saker som all annan forskning har visat tidigare nämligen att det inte finns något att vara orolig för” ...*

- ”The general conclusion of [the Interphone study], is [that] there are no signals that there are any risks that had not been discovered earlier” *“den samlade bedömningen [av Interphonestudien] är [att]det inte finns ...//.. några signaler om att det finns några risker som man inte upptäckt tidigare”.*

- ”Interphone provides no reason to believe that there is a risk” *“ Interphone ger inga skäl att tro att det finns en risk”.*

- ”...after a long time there are still no findings that we did not know of when research started, [thermal effects]” *“..man [har]efter lång tid fortfarande inte hittat något utöver det man redan visste när man började [uppvärmningseffekter].*

3. Anders Ahlbom has chaired several expert panels evaluating health risks of RF-radiation. None of them has taken into consideration the growing number of peer reviewed papers that have found light to strong evidence of biological effects or health effects. All assessment chaired by Ahlbom concludes in a reassuring message confirming that the ICNIRP guidelines protect public health.

- Swedish Radiation Protection Radiation Authority: 8 reports 2003-2010¹⁵

- The EU-Commission: 1 panel chair (2007) and 1 panel as participating expert. ¹⁶

“In conclusion no health effect has been consistently demonstrated at exposure levels below the limits of ICNIRP”¹⁷

¹³ <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarntumor/>

¹⁴ Sveriges Radio, Kropp och Själa, February 1st at 10.00, web: <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=1272>

¹⁵ www.stralsakerhetsmyndigheten.se/Global/Publikationer/Rapport/Stralskydd/2009/SSM-Rapport-2009-36.pdf
2008:12 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Fifth annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields, 2007
2007:04 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Fourth annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields, 2006
2006:02 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Third annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2005
2005:01 Reports from SSI's International Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2003 and 2004

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_007.pdf

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_006.pdf (preliminary opinion)

- Prof. Ahlbom participated in the ICNIRP review of RF-radiation risks in 2009, where he wrote the section on epidemiology.

“Results of epidemiological studies to date give no consistent or convincing evidence of a causal relation between RF exposure and any health effect.”¹⁸

- He also was on the Expert Review Panel for a report to the Irish government in 2007 that concluded:

“So far no short or long term health effects have been found”.¹⁹

OUTCOME-ORIENTED RESEARCH?

Anders Ahlbom has together with his colleague Maria Feychting from KI, conducted the Swedish part of IARC: s international epidemiologic study (Interphone) about possible relations between mobile use and head and neck tumours. The results on malignant brain tumours were presented in May 2010, four years delayed. Reason: the researchers could not agree on how the for the mobile phone industry crucial results would be interpreted and presented. Anders Ahlbom belonged to the group that dismissed the increased risks observed in the study among users with more than 1640 hours (more than 27 minutes a day for ten years), unlike for example the Interphone project manager, the French IARC professor Elisabeth Cardis who was concerned over the observed increased risks.²⁰

When Anders Ahlbom continuously repeats there are no risks in media statements, he forgets, among other studies also his own Interphone results on acoustic neuroma. The Swedish study that he made with Maria Feychting, as well as the Nordic study both showed an increased risk. This is some of the data that is still only partially published.²¹ Ahlbom also found a significant increased risk for glioma (a malignant brain tumour) in the Nordic Interphone study published in 2007.²² The total INTERPHONE results on acoustic neuroma are still kept in the dark by the IARC and professor Ahlbom, although they should have been published 5 years ago.

EARLY SUSPICIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. The mobile phone industry clearly benefits from Anders Ahlbom’s no risk conclusion, and frequently quotes him:

a. A telecom and IT interest group, **IT-företagen**, published an advertisement brochure in 2001, designed like a newspaper: In “Mobile networks, radio-waves and security” a number of selected experts explained why mobile phones, mobile masts and other devices are safe. : Anders Ahlbom was one of these experts.

b. The Swedish chapter of the **Mobile Manufacturers Forum** published an article in the Swedish web paper Second Opinion in 2009, “educating” journalists how to see the difference between sound and bad research studies regarding EMF and cancer, and how to find reliable

¹⁸ www.icnirp.de/documents/RFReview.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/nr/rdonlyres/9e29937f-1a27-4a16-a8c3-f403a623300c/0/electromagneticreport.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.emfacts.com/weblog/?p=1307>

²¹ Interphone results update 2008 Swedish/Nordic results, table 1, 10 years + start from use.

²² Interphone table 1, OR ten 10 + years start from use ipsilateral use

sources. Anders Ahlbom, as an “independent, third party expert” gave the following information, omitting all research indicating health risks as well as the interpretation controversy:

- “As a whole, there is nothing indicating that there are any cancer risks from the mobile phone radiation”. *Totalt sett finns det inget som talar för att det skulle finnas någon risk att få cancer av strålning från mobiltelefoner.*

- “There is no experimental research showing any risks. Basic physics also speaks against it”. *Det finns ingen experimentell forskning som visar att det skulle kunna finnas det. Basal fysik talar också emot det).*

- Ahlbom emphasized that “serious journalists” consult him or one of his colleagues who “understand the issue”. He also recommended ICNIRP as a reliable source, without specifying his own role in the association.²³

“The Authorities should be in charge of standard-setting for radiation, for example. Our research gives input to this work”. *De gränsvärden som ska gälla för till exempel strålning är någonting som myndigheterna måste ta ställning till. Vår forskning är input till det arbetet.*

^[1] Se <http://www.stralsakerhetsmyndigheten.se/Yrkesverksam/Elektromagnetiska-falt/> och exempelvis 2009:36 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Sixth annual report from SSM:s independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2009. Sammanlagt har AA varit ordförande för sju rapporter till SSM/SSI under åren 2003-2010.

^[2] Se www.fas.se exempelvis <http://www.fas.se/upload/dokument/publiaktioner/pdf/eloverrapp08.pdf>.

Sammanlagt har AA varit ordförande för 8 expertrapporter till FAS

^[3] <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/index.php> Volume 102: Non-Ionizing Radiation, Part II: Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields [includes mobile telephones] (24-31 May 2011); Deltagarförteckning: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/vol102-participants.pdf>

^[4] Se Microwave News: IARC welcomes industry to IARC review

<http://www.microwavenews.com/IARC.RF.html#Continued>

^[5] http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihp/docs/scenihp_o_007.pdf

^[6] Se Nilsson, M.: Mobiltelefonins hälsorisker s. 196-197: ”Den inre kretsen”

^[7] ICNIRP guidelines 1998 <http://www.icnirp.de/documents/emfgdl.pdf>, se sid 496 “Basis for limiting exposure”

^[8] www.fas.se: Låg risk att mobilen orsakar hjärntumör. <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarntumor/>

^[9] Signalen nr 2/2009 sid 33

^[10] Aftonbladet 21 maj 1999 Svenska lobbyister satsar på EU-valet

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/9905/21/eu.html>

^[11] Se Interphone results update October 2008 <http://www.iarc.fr/en/research-groups/RAD/Interphone8oct08.pdf>

^[12] Science Daily: Heavy Cell phone use linked to cancer;

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080214144349.htm>

^[13] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npK5HSxukyA>

^[14] Duang et al. 2011: Correlation between cellular phone use....

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21474287>

^[15] ABC Lateline: Study probes link between cancer and phones;

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2010/s2902097.htm>

^[16] YLE, Granskat: Mobiltelefoner och cancer. Vem ska vi tro på?

²³ <http://www.second-opinion.se/so/view/730>