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Cell phone headaches, cell tower blues

by Magda Havas

Imagine a world identical to our own with one exception everyone is deaf. There is no radio and television remains at the level of the silent movie. Telephone communication is visual but beyond that the world is very much like our own.

What would such a world be like?

It would probably be very noisy, since there would be no need for noise control and no regulations to limit noise. Car engines would still roar, perhaps louder than they do now, tires would squeal, birds would sing, and thunder would rumble across the sky but we would not be able to hear any of this.

Now, imagine that some people in this world can hear. They don't realize they are any different except in a few subtle ways. They can predict the coming of storms. They claim to "hear" thunder at a distance. They have difficulty sleeping. In the middle of the night they hear roaring engines, squealing tires, horns blaring and other things that are silent to the rest of us. Because of their poor sleep, they are tired during the day. They become anxious and worried. The noise frightens them but only they can hear it so they begin to question their sanity.

One sufferer, John, confides in a friend who is sympathetic and tells him to visit his family doctor. But the doctor doesn't know what to make of this. The sleeping pills and tranquilizers she prescribes don't stop the noise during the day. Another, less sympathetic doctor recommends a psychiatrist for mental problems. But John doesn't think he's crazy, or is he?

Now, instead of noise, imagine a world where people can't sense radio frequency energy. That is the world we live in. We hear radio frequencies only when they are converted to sound by our radios, televisions, or telephones. If we could hear them this would be a very noisy planet. In the middle of a street in any major city you would hear thousands of simultaneous telephone conversations, hundreds of radio and television stations. It would probably drive most of us crazy.

Fortunately most of us can't "hear" radio frequencies, but some people can sense them. And just like in our make believe world of the deaf, the few individuals who can sense these frequencies can't sleep, develop headaches, and are under constant stress.

The syndrome is called "Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity" and some people are gravely affected. Those who see their doctor are often dismissed, given sleeping pills or sent to a psychiatrist. These people are not crazy. They just happen to be more sensitive than the rest of us to the electromagnetic noise pollution generated by our technological advances.

Below is a quote from a man in Abbotsford, B.C. who has some of the classic symptoms of Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity Syndrome.

"We live one property away from a cell phone tower and have another a half mile down the road... I have been having strange unexplained health issues for three or four years that conventional medical tests cannot solve. Along with these I developed cancer on my right breast when a brown spot that had been there for 35 years suddenly went bad. The following are symptoms that have been occurring over a period of time since these towers were installed and have had no relief to date: headaches, nausea, unsteadiness, pressure in head over eyes, ears, cheeks and back of head. Sometimes blurred vision. General feeling of fatigue and aches for no apparent reason. Have undergone complete blood workup, X-ray, CT Scan. Have tried various alternative medical practices, chiropractic, acupuncture, herbal remedies, exercise, watching diet closer, lose weight and drinking plenty of water. Nothing seems to work. Don't know if the towers are responsible for the above mentioned but I do feel somewhat better when I leave the area for a period of time."

Electromagnetic hypersensitivity has not yet been accepted by our medical professionals. Just like chronic fatigue syndrome, chemical hypersensitivity, and seasonal affective disorder (SAD) it will take some time and many complaining patients before that changes. In the meantime, those suffering need to reduce their exposure to radio frequency radiation not a simple thing to do in our highly technical society.

Our government can play a vital role by restricting the installation of antennas for cell phones on high rise buildings and by increasing the distance of cell phone and broadcast antennas on towers near built up areas. We need "cell phone restricted" areas on trains, buses, and in buildings that have regular phone lines. The levels allowed for radio frequency radiation need to be reduced. Our guidelines are among the worst in the world, along with Great Britain, the U.S.A., Germany and Japan. The more we come to rely on the cell phone, the more antennas that are needed for their use. We have more than 300 transmitting antennas in the City of Peterborough. In Toronto, the number exceeds 10,000 and most were erected since 1980. There is some evidence to suggest that as our exposure to electromagnetic energy increases so will our sensitivity. Sweden recognizes this disorder and has a Web site to provide suffers with information. If you think you are sensitive to electromagnetic energy, please contact me for more information.

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