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# Wi-fi in schools: an invisible threat?

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Carolyn Jarvis, Gaia Willis-Owen, 16:9: Monday, December 20, 2010

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Wifi  
Photo Credit: Global News, 16:9

Sixteen-year-old McKenzie Honing says school makes him feel sick.

The grade 11 British Columbia high school student came home complaining of headaches and heart palpitations. "It felt like my heart was skipping beats," he said. But on the weekends?

"I'd start to get better. And by Sunday I'd start to feel normal."

Just a typical kid trying to get out of class? Maybe. But McKenzie's mom, Lynda Honing, doesn't think so.

She thinks her son's health is at risk. And she's just one of

hundreds of concerned parents across the country speaking out against what they fear may be an invisible threat to their childrens' well being: Wi-Fi in schools.

Global News' current affairs program, 16:9 The Bigger Picture, wanted to find out just how much radiation laptops and routers in schools could be emitting.

So 16:9 asked Kavinder Dhillon, president of LabTest Certification Inc., to test radiation levels in a simulated typical, active wireless classroom.

The result? A reading of 113.8 microwatts – well below Health Canada's recommended threshold of 10 million microwatts.

Just outside the classroom in the hallway, the radiation reading near the router hit 2600 microwatts.

That's 20 times higher than inside the classroom. While it was still low by Health Canada standards, Dhillon expressed some discomfort. "The people who are in the industry, who are testing this," he told 16:9, "they feel this is a high level. This is very high."

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16:9 investigated further with another test to see how a person might react in proximity to radiation levels Health Canada considers safe.

Professor Magda Havas, a Trent University environmental scientist, used a wireless computer and a router on an adult male subject who calls himself "electrically sensitive." In a blind test, Prof. Havas exposed him to microwave radiation at levels similar to those in an average wireless classroom.

She found the closer the router, the faster the subject's heart rate. Although the levels she used in the test were under Health Canada's limit, Prof. Havas has a theory that may explain her findings.

"Some percentage of the population is reacting to this microwave radiation," she said.

But could trading chalkboards for laptops make kids sick? 16:9 asked the Wi-Fi Alliance to comment on wireless products' possible health effects.

The Alliance responded with a written statement. "Wi-Fi technology meets all national and international safety requirements," it said, "and emits signals that are typically hundreds to thousands of times below the safety limits."

When 16:9 first asked Health Canada to respond to parents' concerns about WiFi, Beth Pieteron, a Health Canada representative said there was no reason to worry.

She told 16:9 the amount of radiation children experience in a typical wireless classroom is in no way responsible for the headaches, nausea and hyperactivity some kids say they experience.

"There's no scientific evidence," said Pieteron, "that those kinds of effects are caused by the energy limits the kids are exposed to by Wi-Fi."

Now, after 16:9's investigation aired, putting WiFi in the spotlight, Health Canada is promising to look at the potential health risks associated with WiFi exposure.

Early this month, the Health Committee made recommendations to parliament including an independent long-term study and the development of a process to receive and respond to reports of adverse reactions to radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation.

Dr. David Carpenter from Albany, New York, a world-renowned expert in environmental toxins, told 16:9 the evidence warrants a serious second look.

"The weight of the evidence demonstrates clearly that exposure to RF radiation causes disease," he said, adding, "the evidence is strongest for cancer."

While Canada races to go wireless, in other parts of the world, Wi-Fi has worn out its welcome. Herouville-St.Clair, France is the first municipality in the world to remove W-Fi from schools and public buildings.

Mayor Rudolphe Thomas told 16:9 he's not willing to gamble with childrens' health.

In other European countries, wireless technology is still prevalent, but it's increasingly treated with caution. In Germany, Wi-Fi is still in use but the government recommended children limit their exposure. And in Britain, some public schools independently decided to remove it altogether.

Here, the current precautions are few and the Wi-Fi hotspots are plenty. Parents like Honing are concerned we're sacrificing our kids' health for convenience.

She says she doesn't want to wait. She doesn't want her son to be an experiment. Dr. Carpenter shares her concern.

He told 16:9 it's time for Canada to stop turning a blind eye to Wi-Fi's possible risks. "You don't want to wait until you can count the bodies before you tell the public that there is a serious potential of harm," he said.

"And with regard to the issue of Wi-Fi in schools, this is exactly where we are."

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**Joe**

A number of media outlets have reported that there might be reason to be concerned about radiation from Wi-Fi equipment and that it could be responsible for a variety of health problems. After reviewing scientific studies, Health Canada has determined that [exposure to radiofrequency \(RF\) energy from Wi-Fi equipment](#) is **not** dangerous to the public, including children.

-FROM HEALTH CANADA

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/wifi-eng.php>

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**bwalzer**

This episode showed someone detecting the radio emissions from a Wi-Fi router using nothing other than their body. There have been stories about people being able to detect radio waves from fillings or braces but only in the case where they were quite close to high power transmitters. Since Wi-Fi uses less than a Watt of power this a historical first. This is a much bigger story than the claimed bad effects of Wi-Fi. This is a bit like mentioning that the horse you heard singing was off key. You can't make such an extraordinary claim in passing without distracting everyone from the main point of your piece.

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**bwalzer**

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**Damian**

Gee, a 16 year old feels better after being away from the stress of school. At home, the Video Game System, the Smartphone, the Ipod touch, the laptop, and of course the Microwave in the house, all have no effect?

As for the science, a sample size of one, that wasn't even a blind study. Thats some real quality science.

As you get closer, the power goes up. Gauss' law, 10th grade physics. 2600 is not even a significant number when judged against the 10 Million limit, 0.026 percent.

Nice Fox New quality reporting.

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**nashe**

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