

Submission to UN Convention on the Rights of Persons and Disabilities - a Request for submissions/feedback on the right to inclusive education, article 24 - by 15 January 2016 “Draft general comment on art. 24 UNCRPD”

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your draft general comment regarding the right to inclusive education. In 2015, Jenny Fry, a student in the UK, took her own life as she was suffering from electrohypersensitivity (EHS) and found an environment laden with electromagnetic/radio frequency/Wi-Fi (EMF/RF/Wi-Fi) pulsed microwaves too painful to bear. Few people recognized her symptoms or understood her problem, few had any information about this functional disability/environmental impairment.

The transformation of culture, policy and practice in educational environments is faced, in a neoliberal market, with pressure from a telecommunications industry whose only interest is profit and Governments who seem to believe they have little option, for fear of harming industrial investments.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) classified radio frequency electromagnetic fields as a class 2B possible carcinogen (2011), and currently there are approximately 22,000 independent scientific research papers along with doctors and scientists appeals, all spelling out the health effects from EMF/RF/Wi-Fi exposure. In May 2015, for example, a new appeal was forwarded to the United Nations and the WHO by a group of 200 EMF-bioeffects scientists. Their request was for more precautionary exposure regulations and for information to be made available to protect public health.

The installation of a plethora of wireless devices and the enforced use of iPads for children in school and for school homework is shortsighted in light of these studies. Many children are already victims of electrohypersensitivity and teachers, doctors etc have not been informed or trained to recognize the symptoms of this impairment or to deal with the issue.

The BioInitiative report informs us that these ‘exposures can alter and damage genes, trigger epigenetic changes to gene expression and cause de novo mutations that prevent genetic recovery and healing mechanisms. These exposures may interfere with normal cardiac and brain function; alter circadian rhythms that regulate sleep, healing, and hormone balance; impair short-term memory, concentration, learning and behavior; provoke aberrant immune, allergic and inflammatory responses in tissues; alter brain metabolism; increase risks for reproductive failure (damage sperm and increase miscarriage risk); and cause cells to produce stress proteins’.

From this we can deduce that school exposure to EMF/RF/Wi-Fi affects learning, behaviour, memory and concentration and this is before we even consider the physical health effects.

If education is to encourage inclusiveness, this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. For a growing number of children EMF/RF/Wi-Fi is a barrier to the possibility of inclusiveness as they become marginalized because of their impairment.

Who will take responsibility for the increase in neurological disorders and cancers that may develop in school settings, as well as the potential reproductive problems of the next generation?

At present guidelines only refer to protecting the public against heating/thermal bioeffects based on short-term emissions but not against non-thermal, pulsed or continuous effects, which are more dangerous.

We propose that wired technology be installed in schools as well as the distribution of information to students and/or their parents and teachers regarding the potential health effects of EMF/RF/Wi-Fi and, most importantly, the instigation of the precautionary principal.

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