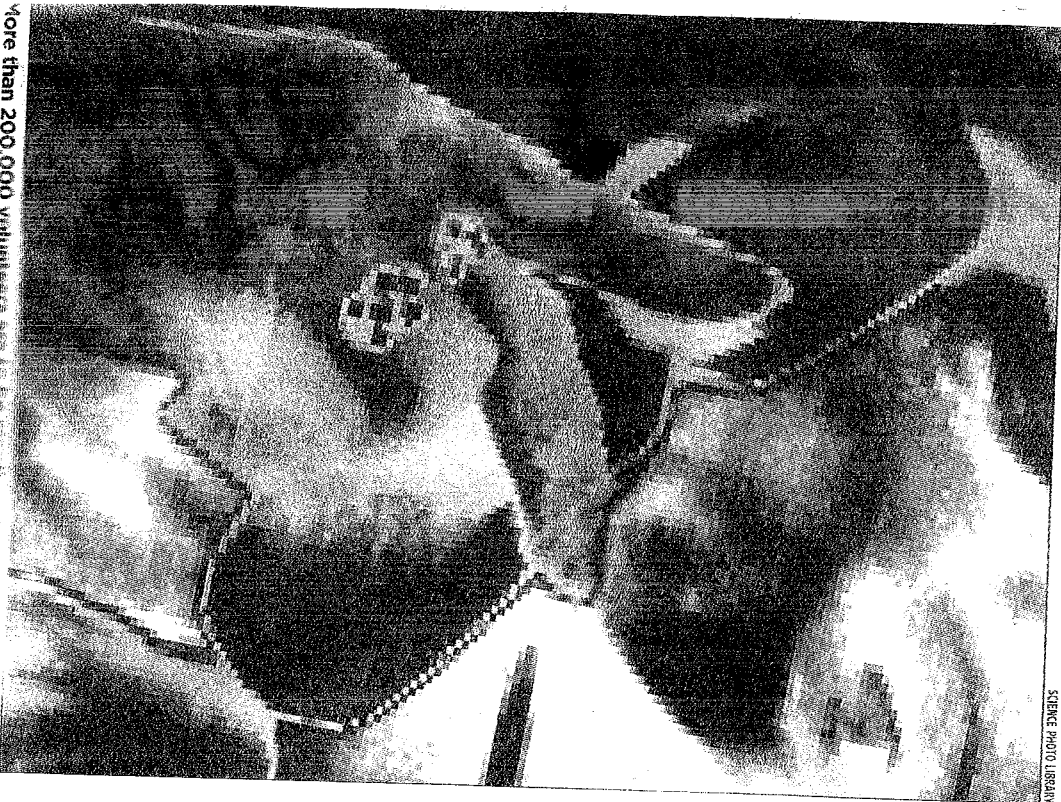


# Cancer study ordered into mobile phones

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More than 200,000 volunteers are being recruited for at least five years

## ► Government expert warns of 'hint of a link' into long-term users

Philip Webster, Helen Rumblelow, Alice Miles

A mass study of the long-term impact of mobile phones is to be undertaken amid fears that people who have used them for more than ten years are at greater risk from brain cancer.

More than 200,000 volunteers, including long-term users, are to be monitored for at least five years to plot mobile phone use against any serious diseases they develop, including cancer and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Professor Lawrie Chalhis, who is in the final stages of negotiation with the Department of Health and the mobile phone industry for the £3 million that he needs to fund the study, told *The Times* that research has shown that mobiles are very safe in the short term but that there is a "hint of something" for people using them longer.

In an interview, Professor Chalhis, a world expert on mobile phone radiation, and chairman of the government-funded mobile telecommunications health research programme, emphasised that the "hint" was just that. One European study has found a slight association

between the risk of brain tumours and using a mobile for more than ten years. The few long-term users developed more acoustic neuroma brain tumours which were found close to the ear used for phoning.

But, because of the tiny numbers involved, "it could be by chance," he said. Asked whether the mobile phone could turn out to be the cigarette of the 21st century in terms of the damage it could inflict, he replied: "Absolutely."

He said that the study was necessary because all the important breakthroughs in what caused cancers had shown that the effects often took more than ten years to show. "You find absolutely nothing for ten years and then after that it starts to grow dramatically. It goes up ten times. You look at what happened after the atomic bombs at Nagasaki, Hiroshima. You find again a long delay, nothing for ten years. The same for asbestos."

He made plain that he was not put off because many existing studies had shown no dangers. "The fact that you don't see anything in ten years is also more or less what you would expect if there is something happening," he said.

Announcing the new study, he said: "Because there is a hint and because the professional epidemiologists who I trust and who do this all the time feel there is a chance

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### Move to cap GPS' pay

The Department of Health threatened to put a cap on GPS' pay, drawing an angry response from the British Medical Association. *News*, page 11

### Spy 'breakthrough'

Police have identified the man they believe poisoned Alexander Litvinenko. The suspect was captured on camera at Heathrow. *News*, pages 32, 33

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