

Key points made by Dr Repacholi, Professor at the University of Rome and former Coordinator of the World Health Organisation EMF Project during the course of an interview on LMFM (17th January 2008) relating to the proposed power lines for the North East of Ireland

-Whilst an association has been shown between an exposure to magnetic fields and an increase in childhood leukaemia in one area of science (epidemiology), almost all the animal and other laboratory studies don't support the association. This fact suggests that there may be other explanations for the epidemiology findings.

-It is impossible to categorically prove that there is no causal link. Science can never prove that something doesn't happen, it cannot prove a negative. All that can be done is to accumulate sufficient evidence to say that there is overwhelming evidence that it doesn't happen.

-Because the science is doubtful the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that precautionary measures that are low in cost are taken, because it may be that no resulting health benefit at all is achieved.

-Eirgrid is adhering to WHO standards. The science that WHO produces is based on the best minds in the field coming together in task groups to make recommendations. These standards are currently being reviewed but it is unlikely that there will be much change as there hasn't been any research indicating a need for change.

-Power lines are not the only source of exposure to magnetic fields. Many people don't realise that household appliances and wiring can be major contributors. If people want to reduce exposure levels, it is necessary to look across the whole spectrum of exposures.

-Routing power lines underground does not eliminate the magnetic field. People walking over lines that are buried are likely to still get exposure, albeit reduced, but not fully reduced from overhead lines.

-If the cables aren't visible, people generally won't know where the lines are. People are able to make the choice to walk around overhead cables, whereas buried cables may be walked over unwittingly.

-Consideration must be given to problems if there are breaks in the power supply. The security of supply could be compromised.