

## OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011 FROM MONA NILSSON:

Leading expert Anders Ahlbom linked to the Telecom Industry.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AT THE WHO

*Professor Ahlbom, who is appointed to chair the expert group on epidemiology at the upcoming IARC evaluation of the carcinogenicity of mobile phone radiation, is the co-founder of “Gunnar Ahlbom AB” a Brussels-based lobby firm aiming to assist the telecom industry on EU regulations, public affairs and corporate communications.*

Professor Ahlbom created the lobby firm in 2010 together with his brother and sister in law who live in Brussels. The brother, Gunnar Ahlbom, is a telecom lobbyist in Brussels since the early 90's, and was already active in this field in 1998 when Professor Ahlbom participated in the setting of the controversial ICNIRP standards on radiation from different sources of non ionizing radiation like wireless devices and cell towers.

- Anders Ahlbom's link to the Telecom Industry through his brother and their common company is a straight-forward explanation of his systematic denial of health risks, says Mona Nilsson, Swedish author and investigation journalist.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and publishes Monographs to identify environmental factors that can increase the risk of human cancer. The preparation of the IARC Monographs on “*Non-Ionizing Radiation, Part II: Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields [includes mobile telephones]*” will start this week in Lyon, France (24-31 of May). The result of the review is of utmost importance to the telecom industry, which is sending three observers to the meeting: Mays Swicord, CTIA (the wireless association), Joe Elder, the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and Jack Rowley, the GSM Association.<sup>1</sup>

The members of the IARC scientific committee have to submit a declaration of interest. Professor Ahlbom has not reported his involvement in the lobby firm, nor his close family relation to a mobile phone industry lobbyist (Gunnar Ahlbom).<sup>2</sup>

The IARC has already banned a scientist from the committee. Dr Alexander Lerchl from the German Radiation Protection Board, has been questioned regarding his relations to the German mobile industry, and was finally not accepted in the committee as “*an IARC Monograph is an exercise that demands complete independence from all commercial interests, and from advocates who might be perceived as advancing a pre-conceived position.*”<sup>3</sup>

#### **“Industry-loyal scientists have seized the interpretation privilege”**

The present revelation doesn't come as a surprise to Mona Nilsson who has been investigating Prof Ahlbom's statements and whereabouts for many years.

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary list of participants: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/vol102-participants.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Anders Ahlbom interest declaration IARC, received April 2011

<sup>3</sup> Letter from IARC to A. Lerchl [www.diagnose-funk.ch/downloads/df\\_bp\\_who-lerchl\\_iarc-26oct10.pdf](http://www.diagnose-funk.ch/downloads/df_bp_who-lerchl_iarc-26oct10.pdf)

- The industry-loyal scientists are easy to recognize. They systematically repeat a set of policy messages that counter the results of independent scientists and coincide with the interests of the industry. This is crystal clear in the case of Professor Ahlbom, who has dismissed all studies indicating health risks or biological effects whenever he has chaired an expert panel on this subject. He even denies the results of his own research if it indicates a health risk.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt he speaks to the benefit of the industry.

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<sup>4</sup> See Background Information below.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.monanilsson.se/page05.htm>

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## THE LOBBY COMPANY Gunnar Ahlbom AB 556808-6374

**Professor Anders Ahlbom from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden has a huge influence on the evaluation on health risks from mobile phone radiation. His brother, Gunnar Ahlbom, is since the 90:ies a lobbyist in Brussels. He has, among others, represented the leading Swedish mobile phone operator TeliaSonera. In 2010 the two brothers formed a consulting company, Gunnar Ahlbom AB, with an address in Brussels.<sup>6</sup>**

**Mission:** *“The company will do consulting in the following areas:*

- *EU affairs, particularly regulations and specifically in telecommunications, IT, environment- and energy regulations as well as in medical techniques*
- *Support in public affairs and corporate communications in telecommunications, IT, environment- and energy regulations as well as in medical techniques*
- *Support in marketing and products in telecommunications, IT, environment- and energy regulations as well as in medical techniques*
- *Trade with stocks and compatible activities.“*

The registration certificate of Gunnar Ahlbom AB can be ordered in English from the Swedish registrations office, Bolagsverket:  
<https://foretagsfakta.bolagsverket.se/fpl-dft-ext-web/produktInformation.seam?cid=15541>

For a confirmation of identity call the Swedish TAX register +46 8 564 851 60.<sup>7</sup>

### **Members of the board of Gunnar Ahlbom AB:**

- \* Ahlbom, Nils Anders (63 years) STOCKHOLM  
Board member
- \* Ahlbom, Lars Gunnar (59 years) B-1200 BRUSSELS  
Board substitute
- \* Périou Ahlbom, Michelle Marie, Member, chairman  
B-1200 BRUSSELS

## **GUNNAR AHLBOM – The brother**

Gunnar Ahlbom is a Swedish lobbyist who lives in Brussels since the early 90's.

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<sup>6</sup> See Gunnar Ahlbom AB, <https://foretagsfakta.bolagsverket.se/fpl-dft-ext-web/produktInformation.seam?cid=15541>

<sup>7</sup> See also encl. Ahlbom CV page 53.pdf

*“Gunnar Ahlbom has a background from the telecommunication industry and works with EU-related issues in Brussels since 1993, for example regulations of telecommunications, regulations of medical equipment and with Research and Development cooperation issues. Since 2002 he assists SOS Alarm by monitoring issues related to 112”. (Swedish original text: ”Gunnar Ahlbom har en bakgrund från telesektorn och arbetar med EU-frågor i Bryssel sedan 1993, bl a med telereglering men också med reglering av medicinsk utrustning och med FoU-samarbeten. Sedan 2002 hjälper han SOS Alarm att bevaka frågor som rör 112”)*<sup>8</sup>

In 1998 he was the leading Swedish mobile phone operator Telia’s ”country manager”. In 1999 the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet referred to him as a “Telia lobbyist in Brussels”.<sup>9,10</sup> In 2006 he was contracted by COCIR, a Brussels-based lobby organisation for the medical equipment industry, the telecommunication industry etc. His brother Anders Ahlbom, was at the same time evaluating health risks with telecommunications as well as medical equipment (MRI) as a chair for the SCENIHR (2006/2007) and as a SCENIHR expert (2009)

Anders Ahlbom has never mentioned his brother’s work as a lobbyist for the telecommunications and the medical industry in his declarations of interest. Neither has he mentioned their common interest in the Gunnar Ahlbom AB company (since 2010).

## **ANDERS AHLBOM**

### **INFLUENCE**

**EU:** Anders Ahlbom, professor in epidemiology at the Karolinska Institute, is one of the most influential international experts on evaluation of health risks of mobile telephony. He chaired an important expert evaluation for the European Commission in 2007, SCENIHR, ”Possible Effects of Electromagnetic Fields on humane Health<sup>[5]</sup> and he participated in a new SCENIHR expert group in 2009.

**Sweden:** Professor Ahlbom has chaired every single expert group on possible health risks with mobile telephony and electromagnetic fields 2003-2011. There have been yearly reports commissioned by the Swedish Radiation Protection Authority and the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) during this period.<sup>[11], [2]</sup>

**WHO:** Anders Ahlbom will chair the IARC epidemiology expert evaluation about cancer risks of mobile telephony in May 2011 (24-31/5).<sup>[3]</sup> The evaluation will serve as a guideline on cancer risk assessments of the mobile telephony for many years.<sup>[4]</sup> Anders Ahlbom has also been engaged as an expert by the WHO and the EU during the last decade.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Signalen nr 2/2009 page 33

<http://www.sosalarm.se/Documents/Nyheter%20och%20Media/Bibliotek/Tidningar/Signalen/Signalennr%20nr%202-09.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Aftonbladet 21 maj 1999 Svenska lobbyister satsar på EU-valet  
<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/9905/21/eu.html>

<sup>10</sup> Aftonbladet 21 maj 1999 Svenska lobbyister satsar på EU-valet  
<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/9905/21/eu.html>

<sup>11</sup> E.g. WHO EMF Meeting: WHO, ICNIRP and the US Military; April 2007 [www.microwavenews.com](http://www.microwavenews.com); and EU EMF-NET 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop in Stresa, Italy, 2-4 May 2007 web: <http://web.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eis-emf/stresa2007.cfm>

**ICNIRP:** Anders Ahlbom was a member of ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) 1998-2008. In 1998 he participated in elaborating the ICNIRP recommendations on radiation limits for mobile telephony. The ICNIRP recommendations were recommended by the EU one year later. They are of huge economic interest to the telecommunications industry. The guidelines are generous and permit an extensive exploitation of the technology. The industry has thus adapted its technology to the ICNIRP values. The ICNIRP recommendations have been widely criticised by NGOs and independent scientists for being obsolete as well as by the European Parliament which has asked the European Commission to review the scientific basis.<sup>12</sup> *The ICNIRP standards do not include possible long term effects, as cancer for example.*<sup>13</sup> Professor Ahlbom is presently serving as a consulting expert to the organisation.

The council of ethics of the Karolinska Institute concluded in 2008 that the ICNIRP-membership might be considered a conflict of interest and that Anders Ahlbom should consequently disclose his relation to ICNIRP whenever he makes statements on mobile telephony health risks.<sup>14</sup>

### **INTELLECTUAL BIAS: A PRE-CONCEIVED OPINION**

There is evidence that Professor Ahlbom has a preconceived opinion about EMF radiation and health risks. The last years he has repeatedly and firmly declared that there are no effects at exposure levels below the ICNIRP-guidelines, systematically ignoring or criticizing the entire body of research concluding there are risks. Below you will find a few examples of Prof. Ahlbom's position:

1. In a recent interview published on the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) website in February 2011, Ahlbom stated<sup>15</sup>:

“The probability of mobile phone radiation causing brain tumours is low”  
*Sannolikheten för att strålning från mobiltelefoner orsakar hjärntumörer är låg.*

...”the reason why this research is conducted is not a biological founded hypothesis about health risks, but ...//... because there is a general concern regarding the effects of electromagnetic fields.” .... *Skälet till att den här forskningen bedrivs är inte en biologiskt grundad hypotes om hälsorisker, utan ...//.. att det finns en allmän oro om vad som händer när man utsätts för elektromagnetiska fält,*

”We are now pretty sure that there is no relation [between mobile phone use and brain tumours], at least after 10-12 years of use. For longer use we still have limited data. *Där är vi nu rätt säkra på att det inte finns något samband, åtminstone inte efter 10–12 års användning. För längre tider än så finns begränsat med data.*

“Furthermore, there are areas that have not been studied, for example mobile phone use among children and youth. There is, however, no reason to believe that there are any risks there either”  
*Dessutom finns det områden som inte studerats ännu, till exempel när det gäller mobiltelefoni bland barn och ungdomar. Det finns dock inga skäl att tro att det föreligger några risker där heller,*

...”I am very satisfied that we don't find any risks”<sup>16</sup> *Jag är väldigt nöjd med att vi inte hittar några risker*

<sup>12</sup> Ries-resolution European Parliament April 2009

<sup>13</sup> ICNIRP guidelines 1998: see ”Basis for limiting exposure” page 3  
<http://www.icnirp.de/documents/emfgdl.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://hudcancer.nu/Beslut.pdf>; Karolinska Institutet dnr 3753-2008-609

<sup>15</sup> Låg risk att mobilen orsakar hjärntumör, FAS, Feb 2011 <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarntumor/>

2. In an interview in the Swedish Public Radio channel 1 on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, Anders Ahlbom declared:<sup>17</sup>

- "Interphone shows the same results as all other research studies so far, namely that there is nothing to be worried about". "*Interphone visar samma saker som all annan forskning har visat tidigare nämligen att det inte finns något att vara orolig för*" ...

- "The general conclusion of [the Interphone study], is [that] there are no signals of any risks that have not been discovered earlier" "*den samlade bedömningen [av Interphonestudien] är [att]det inte finns ..//.. några signaler om att det finns några risker som man inte upptäckt tidigare*".

- "Interphone provides no reason to believe that there is a risk" "*Interphone ger inga skäl att tro att det finns en risk*".

- "...after a long time there are still no findings that we did not know of when research started, [thermal effects]" "*..man [har]efter lång tid fortfarande inte hittat något utöver det man redan visste när man började [uppvärmningseffekter]*".

3. Anders Ahlbom has chaired several expert panels evaluating health risks of RF-radiation. They have all rejected the entire body of peer reviewed papers that have found light to strong evidence of biological effects or health effects. In general, the assessments chaired by Ahlbom conclude in a reassuring message confirming that the ICNIRP guidelines protect public health.

- Swedish Radiation Protection Authority: annual reports 2003-2010<sup>18</sup>

- The EU-Commission: SCENIHR 2007 (chair), SCENIHR 2009 (participating expert).<sup>19</sup>

"In conclusion no health effect has been consistently demonstrated at exposure levels below the ICNIRP recommendations"<sup>20</sup>

- Prof. Ahlbom participated in the ICNIRP review of RF-radiation risks in 2009, where he wrote the section on epidemiology:

"Results of epidemiological studies to date give no consistent or convincing evidence of a causal relation between RF exposure and any health effect."<sup>21</sup>

- He was a member of the Expert Review Panel commissioned by the Irish government in 2007 that concluded:

"So far no short or long term health effects have been found"<sup>22</sup>

## **BRAIN TUMOUR RESEARCH**

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarn tumor/>

<sup>17</sup> Sveriges Radio, Kropp och Själa, February 1<sup>st</sup> at 10.00, web: <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=1272>

<sup>18</sup> [www.stralsakerhetsmyndigheten.se/Global/Publikationer/Rapport/Stralskydd/2009/SSM-Rapport-2009-36.pdf](http://www.stralsakerhetsmyndigheten.se/Global/Publikationer/Rapport/Stralskydd/2009/SSM-Rapport-2009-36.pdf)

2008:12 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Fifth annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields, 2007

2007:04 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Fourth annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields, 2006

2006:02 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Third annual report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2005

2005:01 Reports from SSI's International Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2003 and 2004

<sup>19</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihr/docs/scenihr\\_o\\_007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_007.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihr/docs/scenihr\\_o\\_006.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_006.pdf) (preliminary opinion)

<sup>21</sup> [www.icnirp.de/documents/RFReview.pdf](http://www.icnirp.de/documents/RFReview.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/nr/rdonlyres/9e29937f-1a27-4a16-a8c3-f403a623300c/0/electromagneticreport.pdf>

Anders Ahlbom and his KI colleague Maria Feychting, conducted the Swedish part of IARC's international epidemiologic study (Interphone) about a possible association between mobile phone use and head and neck tumours. The results on malignant brain tumours were presented in May 2010, four years delayed. Reason: the researchers could not agree on how the results should be interpreted and presented. Anders Ahlbom belonged to the group that dismissed the increased risks observed in the study among users with more than 1640 hours (more than 27 minutes a day for ten years), unlike for example the Interphone project manager, the French IARC professor Elisabeth Cardis who was concerned about the observed increased risks.<sup>23</sup>

When Anders Ahlbom continuously repeats that there are no risks in media statements, he omits, among other studies also his own Interphone results on acoustic neuroma. The Swedish study that he made with Maria Feychting, as well as the Nordic study both showed an increased risk. This is some of the data that is still only partially published.<sup>24</sup> Ahlbom also found a significant increased risk for glioma (a malignant brain tumour) in the Nordic Interphone study published in 2007.<sup>25</sup> The total INTERPHONE results on acoustic neuroma have not been made official yet, although they could have been published 5 years ago.

### **EARLY SUSPICIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

1. The mobile phone industry clearly benefits from Anders Ahlbom's no risk conclusion, and frequently quotes him:

a. A telecom and IT interest group, **IT-företagen**, published an advertisement brochure in 2001, designed like a newspaper: In "Mobile networks, radio-waves and security" a number of selected experts explained why mobile phones, mobile masts and other devices are safe. : Anders Ahlbom was one of these experts.

b. The Swedish chapter of the **Mobile Manufacturers Forum** published an article in the Swedish web paper Second Opinion in 2009, explaining for journalists how to make a difference between sound and bad research studies regarding EMF and cancer, and how to find reliable sources. Anders Ahlbom gave the following information:

- "As a whole, there is nothing indicating that there are any cancer risks from the mobile phone radiation". *Totalt sett finns det inget som talar för att det skulle finnas någon risk att få cancer av strålning från mobiltelefoner.*

- "There is no experimental research showing any risks. Basic physics also speaks against it". *Det finns ingen experimentell forskning som visar att det skulle kunna finnas det. Basal fysik talar också emot det).*

- Ahlbom emphasized that "serious journalists" consult him or one of his colleagues who "understand the issue". He also recommended ICNIRP as a reliable source.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.emfacts.com/weblog/?p=1307>

<sup>24</sup> Interphone results update 2008 Swedish/Nordic results, table 1, 10 years + start from use.

<sup>25</sup> Interphone results update 2008, table 1, OR ten 10 + years start from use ipsilateral use

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.second-opinion.se/so/view/730>

- <sup>[11]</sup> <http://www.stralsakerhetsmyndigheten.se/Yrkesverksam/Elektromagnetiska-falt/> och exempelvis 2009:36 Recent Research on EMF and Health Risks. Sixth annual report from SSM:s independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2009. Anders Ahlbom has chaired seven reports to SSM/SSI 2003-2010.
- <sup>[12]</sup> [www.fas.se](http://www.fas.se) <http://www.fas.se/upload/dokument/publiaktioner/pdf/eloverrapp08.pdf>. Anders Ahlbom has chaired 8 reports to FAS
- <sup>[13]</sup> [http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/index.php\\_Volume\\_102](http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/index.php_Volume_102): Non-Ionizing Radiation, Part II: Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields [includes mobile telephones] (24-31 May 2011); Participants: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/vol102-participants.pdf>
- <sup>[14]</sup> Microwave News: IARC welcomes industry to IARC review <http://www.microwavenews.com/IARC.RF.html#Continued>
- <sup>[15]</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihp/docs/scenihp\\_o\\_007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihp/docs/scenihp_o_007.pdf)
- <sup>[16]</sup> Nilsson, M.: Mobiltelefonins hälsorisker s. 196-197: "Den inre kretsen"
- <sup>[17]</sup> ICNIRP guidelines 1998 <http://www.icnirp.de/documents/emfgdl.pdf>, se sid 496 "Basis for limiting exposure"
- <sup>[18]</sup> [www.fas.se](http://www.fas.se): Låg risk att mobilen orsakar hjärntumör. <http://www.fas.se/sv/Publicerat/Forskare-berattar/Forskare-berattar-2011/Lag-risk-att-mobilen-orsakar-hjarntumor/>
- <sup>[19]</sup> Signalen nr 2/2009 page 33
- <sup>[10]</sup> Aftonbladet May 21 1999 Svenska lobbyister satsar på EU-valet <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/9905/21/eu.html>
- <sup>[11]</sup> Interphone results update October 2008 <http://www.iarc.fr/en/research-groups/RAD/Interphone8oct08.pdf>
- <sup>[12]</sup> Science Daily: Heavy Cell phone use linked to cancer; <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080214144349.htm>
- <sup>[13]</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npK5HSxukyA>
- <sup>[14]</sup> Duang et al. 2011: Correlation between cellular phone use.... <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21474287>
- <sup>[15]</sup> ABC Lateline: Study probes link between cancer and phones; <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2010/s2902097.htm>
- <sup>[16]</sup> YLE, Granskat: Mobiltelefoner och cancer. Vem ska vi tro på?