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Electromagnetic HyperSensitivity (EHS): desperation for a denied illness

Pistoia, 15 February 2009 – During the night of 14-15 February a 48-year-old lady, M. from Pistoia in Tuscany, committed suicide because she was exasperated by a complex disabling illness.

She had a motor disability, and a few months ago she started to be extremely sensitive to electro-magnetic fields and chemicals, so she had lost her autonomy and she also suffered from the isolation caused by these sensitivities. The help of friendly people and of patient organizations was not enough to give her confidence in the future.

M. had a burning sensation in her head and throughout her body, tinnitus in her ears, and a feeling of suffocation when she was in contact with a freshly washed fabric or near a computer, a phone or an electrical appliance. She could not even use the phone because it gave her a headache. These are all very common symptoms for those suffering from Electro-HyperSensitivity (EHS), a condition that, according to medical estimates, affects 1 to 8% of the population.

M. was in contact with the Association for Chronic Toxic and/or Environmental Injury (AMICA) and the Association of Italian Electro-HyperSensitive people (AIE), who have been trying for months to help the lady as much as possible and who had provided scientific evidence to take to her doctors.

"We know that she had plans to move to the mountains, away from phones, masts and power lines," says Silvia Bigeschi, Vice President and Head of AMICA Tuscany.

The lady started to react to electromagnetic fields last April, shortly after a therapy session with electromagnetic stimulation, and she wondered if this could be the cause of her deterioration.

"M. had metal plates in her body, which may increase the absorption of electromagnetic fields up to hundreds of times and, according to some scientific studies (Irvine No 2004), these represent a risk factor for EHS people," said Anna Zuccherò, physician and President of Associazione Italiana Electro.

"The ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) guidelines do not specify limits to ensure safety for people with metal prostheses, and we have been waiting for the last 10 years for CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) to determine limits of exposure for these subjects," Dr. Zuccherò adds.

"Many scientists complain that the current standards do not protect citizens' health [1], and the European Parliament [2] recommended last September reviewing the ICNIRP limits for exposure to ElectroMagnetic Fields, precisely because of the emergence of diseases like EHS and MCS (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity)," comments Francesca Romana Orlando, Vice President of AMICA.

EHS is a recognized disability in Sweden, where there are initiatives to overcome "electric barriers" and, similarly, in the United States and in Germany, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity is recognized as a physical disability by several administrations. A few months ago the first village for the EHS was created in France: www.zoneblanche.fr

According to international associations such as www.next-up.org and www.microwavenews.com, this condition has not received worldwide recognition because of the significant conflict of interest of the former leader of the WHO group appointed to study electromagnetic fields.

A.M.I.C.A. and A.I.E. believe that the silence of the institutions and their failure to protect people suffering from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Electro-HyperSensitivity could be considered a real crime, and the two organizations are considering taking legal action.

"The only investment by the Ministry of Health in the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (the scientific arm of the Ministry) is going to a study concerning the change in the perception of the risk from electromagnetic fields (project CAMELET); this is contrary to the provisions of the law regarding the need for studies on their impact on health," the President of the Italian EHS complains.

"M. loved the truth, intellectual honesty and social commitment. We invite everyone to listen to what she is telling us with her death, in order to save others from having to endure the same suffering," says Dr. Zuccherò.

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