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Cancer clusters at phone masts

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SEVEN clusters of cancer and other serious illnesses have been discovered around mobile phone masts, raising concerns over the technology's potential impact on health.

Studies of the sites show high incidences of cancer, brain haemorrhages and high blood pressure within a radius of 400 yards of mobile phone masts.

One of the studies, in Warwickshire, showed a cluster of 31 cancers around a single street. A quarter of the 30 staff at a special school within sight of the 90ft high mast have developed tumours since 2000, while another quarter have suffered significant health problems.

The mast is being pulled down by the mobile phone after the presentation of the evidenceoperator O2 by local protesters. While rejecting any links to ill-health, O2 admitted the decision was "clearly rare and unusual".

Phone masts have provoked protests throughout Britain with thousands of people objecting each week to planning applications. There are about 47,000 masts in the UK.

Dr John Walker, a scientist who compiled the cluster studies with the help of local campaigners in Devon, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands, said he was convinced they showed a potential link between the angle of the beam of radiation emitted from the masts' antennae and illnesses discovered in local populations.

"Masts should be moved away from conurbations and schools and the power turned down," he said.

Some scientists already believe such a link exists and studies in other European countries suggest a rise in cancers close to masts. In 2005 Sir William Stewart, chairman of the Health Protection Agency, said he found four such studies to be of concern but that the health risk remained unproven.