



A Cell Phone Tragedy

Until now, I have been very careful to keep the names of the women that I have identified with cell phone related breast cancer confidential. However, in recent weeks one brave patient has decided to go public with her story. The patient, Tiffany Frantz, is now a 22 year old. She started placing her cell phone in her bra at age 16. She told me that on a typical day she would place her phone in her bra in the early morning and that it would stay in her bra until late evening. She also said that it was typical for her to send hundreds of text messages a day.

At age 21 she found a lump directly below where the cell phone was placed on her breast. Her MRI showed multiple masses and a biopsy of one of the masses was positive for breast cancer. A mastectomy was required and two of her lymph nodes were positive. She did well for about one year and then developed pain in her hip. A recent scan showed that the cancer had spread to her bones. She is now back on chemotherapy. Despite the setback, she remains positive. She is now on a mission to get the word out about the risks associated with placing cell phones in direct contact with the breast.

She has recently done a T.V. interview in an effort to make her story public. I doubt if anyone could watch the interview without being moved. I encourage everyone to click here to learn more about Tiffany's story:
www.wgal.com/news/8-on-your-side/did-cellphone-cause-womans-breast-cancer/-/17986766/19999702/-/3x3butz/-/index.html

Tiffany's mom, Traci, is also on a campaign to alert mothers of the risk of letting their daughters place their cell phones in their bras. Traci is well aware that many young girls find it "cool" to hide their cell phone in their bras during class time. She also is convinced that more and more young girls are doing what Tiffany did which is keeping the cell in the bra from morning till night. For more information on Traci's campaign to increase public awareness about storing cell phones in the bra, link to Traci's website: www.facebook.com/traci.frantz. It is also worth noting Traci's tag line: "Be healthy, Stay Well....Wear your bra without your cell."

Despite my concern that placing cell phones in direct contact with the breast is a risk factor for developing breast cancer, it is important to note that there is no scientific proof that cell phones can cause any kind of cancer. There are many studies that suggest that exposure to the electromagnetic radiation (EMR) emitted from cell phones could cause cancer, but to date, there is insufficient data to prove a cause and effect relationship. There does seem to be a growing consensus among researchers that more data is urgently needed to clarify this important issue.

It is also important to note that virtually all the manufactures of cell phones warn users not to place the cell phone in contact with the body. In fact, the blackberry manual states that the cell phone should be kept one inch from the body, and that failure to do so could result in serious harm.

The cell phone controversy is unlikely to be resolved in the next few years. It took decades to prove that smoking was a cause of lung cancer. It also took decades to prove that exposing young women to multiple chest x-rays increased their risks of developing early onset breast cancer. Until we have more information on the risk of placing cell phones in contact with the breast, every effort must be made to discourage this behavior.