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WindVOiCe, a Self-Reporting Survey: Adverse Health Effects, Industrial Wind Turbines, and the Need for Vigilance Monitoring

Carmen M.E. Krogh¹, Lorrie Gillis², Nicholas Kouwen³, and Jeff Aramini⁴

Abstract

Industrial wind turbines have been operating in many parts of the globe. Anecdotal reports of perceived adverse health effects relating to industrial wind turbines have been published in the media and on the Internet. Based on these reports, indications were that some residents perceived they were experiencing adverse health effects. The purpose of the WindVOiCe health survey was to provide vigilance monitoring for those wishing to report their perceived adverse health effects. This article discusses the results of a self reporting health survey regarding perceived adverse health effects associated with industrial wind turbines.

Keywords

Self-reporting, adverse health effects, industrial wind turbines, health survey, vigilance monitoring

Introduction

Many Ontarians living close to industrial wind turbines (IWTs) who believe they are suffering adverse health effects are hesitant to report their symptoms. Individuals report that this hesitancy is because of the manner in which their claims have often been discounted or ignored by the wind energy industry and government officials (Hansard, 2009, pp. G-516, G-547). As a result of a limited number who first came forward to report their symptoms, WindVOiCe was established in March 2009.

WindVOiCe is a self-reporting health survey that collects data about adverse health effects being reported by families living near IWTs. The WindVOiCe health survey follows the principles of Health Canada's *Canada Vigilance Programs*, which encourages all consumers in Canada to self-report perceived adverse health effects from prescription and consumer products, vaccines and other. Medical and health care practitioners are encouraged to report perceived adverse health effects to the *Canada Vigilance*. Consumers do not have to prove the effect, only perceive it. The pharmaceutical industry is obligated by law to submit any reported adverse health effects it receives to Health Canada (Health Canada, n.d.).

The objectives of WindVOiCe are to

document any changes in health outcomes among individuals living near IWTs

if documented, provide information to assess the need for large-scale controlled epidemiological studies and to establish evidence-based and safe residence setback distances.

Methods

Study Design and Participant Recruitment

This is a self-reporting survey based on perceived adverse health effects occurring with the onset of an industrial wind turbine facility.

The WindVOiCe survey questionnaire reproduced that of Harry (2007). The questionnaire is designed to collect basic demographic information and information on any new adverse health outcomes and changes to quality of life since the start of the respective IWT project (Appendix A). Health outcome observations included headaches and migraines, heart

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