

Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity – The Swedish Experience

There are very few books about electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS), but two Swedish books are now available in English. Sweden was one of the first countries where EHS showed up, and it is today more officially accepted there than MCS is. The first Swedish standards for computer screen radiation were already set in the 1980's, and most major manufacturers adhered to them by the mid-1990's.

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“The Invisible Disease” by Gunni Nordstrom (ISBN 1 903816 71 8, 230 pages, O-Books, 2004) is her third book about EHS. She has covered the subject as an investigative journalist for over a decade and appears to have interviewed just about every person on each side of the issue. She even tracked down some of the earliest patients, who got sick in 1979. She tells both personal stories and stories of several groups who became sick at their workplace, and how the employers and social services handled the situation. There are also stories of heroic researchers who must battle their colleagues and funding agencies to continue their research. Some of the research has uncovered important clues, such as the fact that the radiation from a cell-phone and other electronics make the brain much more accessible to chemical compounds that happen to be a person's blood stream. That brings forward the thought that EHS and MCS are very closely related, a synergistic effect from exposures to electromagnetic fields and chemicals at the same time—for instance, from a new computer, which both radiates and offgasses many types of chemicals.

It is an easy book to read, that also has interest for people with “just” MCS, regardless of the country.

“Black on White: Voices and Witnesses About Electro-Hypersensitivity” by Rigmor Granlund-Lind and John Lind (150 pages, Mimers Brunn, 2004) is available for free in the English translation at:

www.feb.se/feb/blackonwhite-complete-book.pdf

In 2000, the Swedish government set up a commission to look at EHS. They solicited written and oral statements and received 415 letters and more than thirty public testimonials. This book is a compilation of this very large material, from many eloquent and insightful people, who bring forth several ideas for research, as well as their personal stories. One interesting observation is that insecticides and EMF radiation have the same effect on the central nervous system.

There are many encouraging stories of companies that provided low-radiation equipment to their employees, and fast enough, so they could continue working. It is clear from the stories that early intervention is essential, while toughing it out only causes ever-increasing permanent damage. Some stories report on successful modifications to electrical systems, so people got better, while there are other stories about people who had to flee the electronic smog of developed areas for the deep woods of outback Sweden—far from any cell-tower and power pole.

The many references to social agencies may be confusing to the American reader. The taxes are much higher in Sweden than in America, but then the government is expected to provide comprehensive help in time of need, such as paying for modifying people's homes. Both books bring many stories about abusive doctors, corporate power and conflicts of interest among those who make the decisions. Those seem to be universal problems.