

Diario de Sevilla

BRENES: DANGERS IN THE SCHOOL PLAUGROUND

The school that is cursed

A mobile phone mast installed on school property might be the cause of more than 100 cancer cases among the students and staff.

FERNANDO PEREZ AVILA | 18/01/2010

Fear! Fear of cancer, fear of death, and the daily fear of finding another case among the pupils. Every morning, the fear of disease that might affect the person next to you because of the phone mast that has still not been removed ...

Two children ill, one dead and more than 100 people suffering from various kinds of cancer, all in a short space of time - a tally that shows something is dreadfully wrong.

So much so that even the doctors in the main hospital in Seville are surprised, and ask each new patient if they live anywhere near the phone mast in Brenes.

All the people affected blame the mobile phone antennas on the mast that was installed in the playground of the Manuel de Falla school in the town of Vega del Guadalquivir.

Two pupils in the school now have cancer, one in the eye and another in the thyroid, and another child died suddenly, with no explanation from anyone being given to the family.

A young woman who came to the school for work training has just been diagnosed with lymphatic cancer.

In total there are more than one hundred cases of cancer among the pupils, the teachers, the domestic staff and the residents living nearby.

"What's going on here is not normal. We don't understand why we have a phone mast right in the school playground. We just want to get rid of it, and certainly not have it put up again somewhere else. We're not against mobile phones or anything else, but we don't want them killing our children," declares Carida Magro, mother of one of the children who now has cancer.

She has written to the Ombudsman, to the social services, to the town council, to Parliament, to newspaper editors and anyone else who will listen. But all that she has managed to achieve so far is to publicise the problem and make people aware of it.

Worse still, everyone points out that there isn't just one phone mast but three of them [for different networks]. In fact within about 200 metres of the school there are two more masts. *"It's a cursed triangle,"* declares Juan Gómez, who lives nearby and in whose family there are several cancer cases.

In this part of the town it's hard to find even one family where everyone is healthy. *"My father died four months ago", "in my house three people out of five are sick", "in these flats three people are sick",* these are the inevitable answers you get when you ask people in the neighbourhood about this affair.



Facing the mobile phone mast, Maria Isabel Gomez, a former pupil who had to fight against cancer, surrounded by staff and parents



The mother of a pupil at the Manuel de Falla school living nearby, in front of the phone mast

Apart from the cancer cases, there is a related proliferation of thyroid conditions. "At Macarena hospital they ask us every time if we come from Brenes. It's not right, we're all on the way to dying here and nobody is doing anything to put a stop to it," explains another young woman in whose family three people are sick.

Maria Isabel Gomez, a young woman of 18, has recovered from her illness, a lymphatic cancer that was diagnosed when she was 16. "It's an age when you're very sensitive. I had chemo, I lost all my hair and I couldn't go out with my friends, I stayed at home all day, and I lost a whole year of school."

Her mother recalls how full of life she used to be. "To see your daughter throwing up and her health crumbling away is heartbreaking and painful."

One pupil has lost the sight of one eye because of [a retinal blastoma](#) [Fr] [*perhaps a radiation-induced osteogenic sarcoma? Ed*]. Five others have had an operation to remove part of the thyroid and ganglial tumours in different parts of the body. A third pupil died earlier this year. The official cause of their sudden death was never found in spite of an official enquiry and an inquest.

Among the teaching staff there are several cases of breast cancer, leukaemia and degenerative diseases.

The phone mast was put up in the playground in 2001. Until not very long ago the children could get close to it, touch it and even climb up it! Recently a wall was built to shield it.

In 2002 the town council issued a decree prohibiting the installation of phone masts close to residential areas, but at the time they had no power to do so. With phone masts put up before this date it is difficult to get rid of them. The case is currently before the courts but it has cost eight years of battle and far too many deaths in the neighbourhood.

"In theory the courts are preparing to pass a judgement that will put a stop to phone masts that have more than 20 Hertzian repeaters," declared Carida Magro. "The local council supports us and has itself brought two cases before the court in Lora and another in Seville. But there is still no answer from the town council. We brought up the problem with the delegate to the National Education Board, but it's the same story, we're still waiting for an answer."

The residents here in Brenes are now desperate, and are even talking about taking further action such as camping indefinitely in front of the head offices of the Telefónica mobile phone network in Madrid.

"We cannot tolerate our children spending more than five hours a day, five days a week, being exposed to the radiation from this phone mast. It is not right."



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