

French woman wins disability grant for 'gadget allergy'

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Sufferers of Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity insist that exposure to mobile phones, wifi routers, televisions and other gadgets cause them anything from mild discomfort to life-ruining disability

A French court has awarded a disability grant to a woman claiming to suffer from a debilitating allergy to electromagnetic radiation from everyday gadgets such as cellphones.

The applicant, Marine Richard, 39, hailed the ruling as a "breakthrough" for people afflicted by Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity (EHS).

The condition is not recognised as a medical disorder in most countries, including France, but sufferers insist that exposure to mobile phones, wifi routers, televisions and other gadgets cause them anything from mild discomfort to life-ruining disability.

Scientific studies have found no evidence linking electromagnetic exposure to the symptoms—tingling, headaches, fatigue, nausea, or palpitations.

Richard, a former radio documentary producer, has opted for a reclusive life in the mountains of southwest France, in a renovated barn without electricity, and drinking water from the well.

In a ruling last month, a court in the southern city of Toulouse decided she can claim a disability allowance—about 800 euros (\$912) per month for an adult—for a period of three years.

The ruling accepted that her symptoms prevented Richard from working, but stopped short of recognising EHS as an illness.

Her lawyer Alice Terrasse said the ruling could set a legal precedent for "thousands of people" concerned.

"It's a breakthrough," added Richard.

The World Health Organisation lists EHS as a condition, but says there is "no scientific basis" for linking the symptoms to electromagnetic exposure.

Sweden and Germany have classified it as an occupational disease.

Double-blind scientific trials, where neither the patient or researcher was aware whether they had been exposed to [electromagnetic waves](#), have refuted any link to the symptoms, and many experts ascribe the condition to a phobia.

Some believe it might be triggered by the so-called "nocebo" effect—the placebo effect in reverse—when people feel unwell because they believe they have been exposed to something harmful.

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