Glyphosate classification by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC):
Objective facts questioning its neutrality.

The IARC glyphosate working group met from March 3 to 10, 2015. It was composed of 17 members and chaired by Aaron Blair. The group classified this herbicide as a "probable carcinogen", without being followed by any scientific agency in the world (see ANNEX 1). How can this be explained?

This compilation contains documents made public following the legal proceedings (depositions) in the context of the lawsuits against Monsanto in the United States.

A number of converging facts allow to question the "ideological" neutrality of several members of this working group, the obvious conflicts of interest of some of them (in connection with predatory law firms using the IARC rankings) and, in general, a lack of transparency - clearly voluntary - of IARC on its working procedures.

It is also noted that studies that should have changed the classification of glyphosate were not examined on the grounds that they were not published (a rule not always applied by IARC in the past) despite the fact that Working Group Chairman Blair was aware of their results because he was involved in these studies.

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Deposition of Aaron Blair
Retired from National Cancer Institutes (USA), Chair of the IARC Working Group 112 classifying glyphosate.

Full transcript of the Deposition:

Significant excerpts, copied and pasted below (Q: question; A: Blair’s answer).

Point 1. Failure to take into account the AHS epidemiological study
This working group did not take into account the most recent results from the Agricultural Health Study (AHS), a large cohort of 89,000 farmers and spouses from Iowa and North Carolina, which does not show a link between glyphosate exposure and cancer. Blair explains that IARC only considers published data. Yet Blair was aware of the results because he co-authored the study.

Point 2. Failure to take into account the NAPP meta-analysis
Similarly, the working group did not take into account the results of the North American Pooled Project (NAPP) meta-analysis. Blair was also aware of these results (no correlation between
Glyphosate exposure and cancer) as he was involved in the study.

Undeniable conclusions of points 1 and 2.
In both cases, Blair did not inform the task force of these recent negative results and let the group vote in favor of an association between glyphosate exposure and cancer (non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma). He himself voted in favor although he knew it was wrong:

In addition, Blair stated that had the IARC reviewed the more recent data available at the time of the Glyphosate Working Group meeting, the outcome of the IARC decision on glyphosate would have been different:
Points 3 and 4. Inexplicably delayed publications

In these two studies, the depositions revealed that the authors of these studies wished to publish their results quickly so that it could be taken into account by the IARC working group. In both cases, studies taken into account glyphosate were only published after the IARC classification.

**Point 3**

For the AHS study, a scientific article entitled "Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma Risk and Insecticide, Fungicide and Fumicide Use in the Agricultural Health Study" was submitted on March 2014 (published in October 2014) by Alavanja et al. ([https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25337994](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25337994)), but this article does not include the herbicides studied by the AHS.


“At the current time IARC is making plans for a new monograph on pesticides. Considering IARC's timetable for selecting candidate pesticide for the monograph, it would be irresponsible if we didn’t seek publication of our NHL manuscript in time to influence IARC's decision”.

Despite the urgency noted by Alavanja, the data on glyphosate were finally submitted for publication only 3 years and 5 months later (August 22, 2017) and published on November 9, [https://academic.oup.com/jnci/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/jnci/djx233/4590280?redirectedFrom=fulltext](https://academic.oup.com/jnci/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/jnci/djx233/4590280?redirectedFrom=fulltext)

**Point 4**

Regarding the study NAPP, an email from one of the authors mentions the possibility of having a first draft ready in the coming weeks, for submission early 2015 or before, but the article was finally submitted on June 2016. Blair does not provide any explanation as to the delay.

**Conclusions of points 3 and 4**

The IARC issued its opinion while the publications on two major studies invalidating the link between glyphosate and cancer, known to some of its experts, had been inexplicably delayed. IARC justified itself on the grounds that it does not take into account unpublished studies.

Would it not have been reasonable and responsible to defer the work pending the publication of such important studies?
Deposition of Christopher J. Portier,
Participant in the IARC working group from March 3 to 10, 2015, as an "invited specialist".
Full transcript of the deposition:
Significant excerpts, copied and pasted below (Q: question; A: Portier's answer).

Point 1. A documented lack of neutrality
Prior to joining IARC, Portier worked for years as a consultant for the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), an anti-pesticide lobbying group.
https://www.edf.org/people/senior-contributing-scientists

Portier co-signed an article (published on February 1, 2014) against the retraction of Séralini's discredited article: https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1408106

This lack of neutrality is known to IARC: affiliation with EDF is mentioned in Portier's biography at IARC: https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PORTIER_Bio.pdf

Despite his lack of neutrality, Portier was chairman from 7-9 April 2014 of the IARC Monograph Advisory Group which defined the priorities of the CIRC monographs of the CIRC, declaring his conflict of interest only later (see note below):

This choice of priorities was the subject of a publication in June 2014 in The Lancet, where the conflicts of interest of President Portier are not mentioned, which triggered a corrigendum of The Lancet in October 2018:
Despite his lack of neutrality, Portier joined the IARC glyphosate working group. His official title of "specialist (guest)" is all the more surprising since he acknowledges during the depositions before the court to have no expertise in this case:

The questions that arise are:
Why is somebody with questionable neutrality chosen to hold IARC responsibilities?

Point 2. Financial links with a predatory law firm targeting glyphosate
Portier acknowledged having signed a contract with the law firm Lundy, Lundy, Soleau & South, specializing in complaints against industrial companies (in this case exploiting the IARC’s classification of glyphosate, see ANNEX 2) 9 days after publication of the said classification:

This contract paid Portier at least US $160,000 (until June 2017), allegedly for the first preparatory work as litigation consultant (travel expenses not included):
Portier acknowledged (with difficulty) that he worked for Lundy two months before March 2015 (i.e. before the date of his involvement in the IARC classification of glyphosate):

Point 3. Portier previously worked with Lundy

Mr. Portier admitted that he was already working for Lundy following another IARC classification:
It probably was about radiofrequency electromagnetic fields, classified as "possibly carcinogenic to humans" (Group 2B) in Monograph No. 102 in 2011:
Portier was also a member of the corresponding working group and even the chair of the ‘Mechanisms’ Subgroup:

**Conclusion:** Portier had, therefore, before his involvement in the glyphosate file, a long experience of the profit that can be made thanks to the IARC rankings.

**Point 4. An amazing motivation for defending IARC rankings**

In the face of criticism of IARC's classification of glyphosate, Portier appears extremely motivated considering he was a simple "guest specialist". In an e-mail to other members of the glyphosate working group, he volunteered to defend the said classification by saying that he would not let the critics question it.

Read the mail: 

This lead him to travel for glyphosate interviews with the European Commissioner for Health, the European Chemicals Agency, the German Bundestag and various ministries in Europe.

Portier concealed his conflicts of interest during these interviews.
At a congress (Ramazzini Days), he even goes on to mention economically motivated activities (of others!) that would have influenced the science of glyphosate:

Note that some have considered that the difference between the IARC classification and all other agencies opinions could be explained by different purposes: IARC studies the hazard (theoretical, what one substance can do), the others study the risk (what the substance actually does). But this is NEVER IARC's position, which rather attacks the others, notably EFSA (European Food Safety Authority).

Thus Portier does not stay in a normal scientific framework but rather is extremely virulent against EFSA when the latter contradicts the classification of the IARC.
(note his affiliations at the end of the letter, without no mention to his link to EDF)
Deposition of Charles William Jameson
Member of the IARC Working Group on Glyphosate, Chair of the Subcommittee on Experimental Cancer Animals, he is presented as a consultant:

Charles William Jameson (Subgroup Chair, Cancer in Experimental Animals)
CWJ Consulting, LLC
Cape Coral, FL
USA


The Deposition of Mr. Jameson of May 3, 2017
https://usrtk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/May-2017-Deposition-of-Charles-Jameson-1.pdf revealed that he has been an expert used by the plaintiffs’ lawyers against Monsanto.

The demonstrated interests of Jameson.
He was paid to produce an expert report in support of complaints based on the classification of glyphosate by the IARC Working Group

...
IARC staff: questionable practices and relationships

Point 1. Lack of neutrality of other members of the glyphosate working group
Other members of the IARC working group took part in the attacks against EFSA. At the initiative of Portier, half of the members of the IARC working group signed, with others, a letter dated 27 November 2015 addressed to the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, to urge him to ignore the positive assessment of EFSA on glyphosate.
Read the letter and EFSA's reply:

In January 2016, Portier was joined by members of the Glyphosate Working Group (Francesco Forastiere, Ivan I. Rusyn and Hans Kromhout) at a private meeting with Commissioner Andriukaitis to lobby against EFSA's position.
https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/attachments/27._bto_meeting_redacted.pdf

Point 2. A network of inappropriate alliances between IARC staff, members of the IARC working group and activists.
Kurt Straif, Head of the IARC Monograph Section, communicates to C. Portier and Hedwig Emmerig (in charge of biotechnology and bioethics of Alliance 90 / The Green Party at the German Bundestag) a conspiracy article by Carey Gillam, employee of the anti-GMO activist organization USRTK. Clearly, it is to provide ammunition against the conclusion of the Joint FAO / WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (which includes glyphosate)
(https://www.who.int/foodsafety/jmprsummary2016.pdf)
To defend the classification of the IARC, they choose to attack another commission of the WHO.

Point 3. Kate Guyton, IARC Officer, and her relationship with activists
E-mails show that Guyton has highlighted attacks by anti-GM activists like GMWatch's Claire Robinson to C. Portier (https://www.deniersforhire.com/deniers-for-hire/chris-porter/) and Martyn T. Smith (https://www.deniersforhire.com/deniers-for-hire/martyn-t-smith/) who worked for IARC, obviously to provide them with ammunition in their own campaign to defend IARC:
Guyton has agreed to "testify" at the parody of justice called "International Monsanto Tribunal" organized by activists, but has not been granted permission to do so by the WHO. Thus prevented to attend, Ms. Guyton proposed to Ms. Robin, one of the organizers, to invite Mr. Blair (Chairman of the working group on glyphosate, and not bound by the same obligation).

The email sent by Robin to Blair, which proves all these elements:

**Point 4. Outgoing IARC Director Christopher Wild refuses transparency.**

Christopher Wild not only refused to attend the hearing of the US House of Representatives Science Committee on the functioning of IARC, but on January 11, 2018, Wild wrote a letter to this commission

which he concludes saying IARC "would be grateful" if they did not require transparency or tried to access confidential IARC documents and e-mails, and wished "immunity" for this organization.

**Point 5. Another IARC Transparency Denial**

As part of an information request, under US Access to Information Legislation (FOIA), on e-mails exchanged between several scientists from the US EPA and the National Toxicology Program (NTP), on the one hand, and the Glyphosate IARC scientific team, on the other hand, access to e-mails from these officials was denied, due to IARC's refusal of openness: "the intent of IARC was not to relinquish control of their own records. IARC provided the following information regarding ownership of the records in question : ...it is the position of IARC that all draft documents and materials prepared by the Working Group in advance of or during the in-person Monograph meeting are to be considered draft
and deliberative. Working Group members prepare these materials on behalf of IARC, and not as part of their official employment duties for a state or federal institution, and **IARC is the sole owner of all such materials.** IARC does not encourage participants to retain working draft documents after the related Monograph has been published**

IARC's questionable working methods
Deposition of Matthew Ross
Member of the working group on glyphosate, specifically involved in subgroup 4 "mechanisms" (which can trigger cancer).


It should be noted that the answers provided by Ross are most often of the "I do not know, I do not remember" type. Ross often entrenches himself behind the procedure imposed at the beginning of meetings not to examine unpublished studies in a peer-reviewed journal.

The deposition tells us that this has not been the case in all past IARC monographs. Page 123:

Q. Do you know, in working group 118 and working group 119, they looked at non-published literature?

Page 124

Q. Do you know that IARC doesn't always follow what you're saying is the rule of only looking at published literature? Do you know that?

Ross did not know ...

To the question whether these studies could have changed his assessment, Ross again hides himself behind the instructions received not to consider these studies.

Q. Right. So you're agreeing with me. You don't even know what -- you didn't know how that would have affected your analysis?

A. I can't speculate on that because we were instructed to look at the publicly available literature.

Ross was questioned about a study by Bolognesi and collaborators https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15287390902929741 on people exposed to glyphosate on the border between Colombia and Ecuador after aerial treatments to destroy coca fields. Ross acknowledges that this study has had a significant impact on IARC's findings on glyphosate (increased chromosome damage as interpreted by the IARC study).
Problem: when questioned, the correspondence author of this article, Keith Solomon, finds the IARC’s findings “totally wrong”:

The Bolognesi et al. paper was used by IARC, claiming that residents in several communities had increased chromosomal damage after spraying glyphosate formulations. Before the monograph was published, one of the authors of that paper, Keith Solomon, claimed that IARC got the conclusion “totally wrong” (there were no differences). Still IARC used the Bolognesi et al paper in their monograph and ignored one of its authors’ interventions. Either the IARC authors are blind or politically motivated (probably both and certainly neither scientific nor professional). The EPA’s view on the Bolognesi paper was that it was of a very low quality and not worth considering.

On page 242, Ross acknowledges that members of the task force are encouraged not to keep records of the procedures followed:
An investigation by journalist Kate Kelland (Reuters)

On the basis of documents made public during the above-mentioned depositions in the USA, the journalist showed that between a version called “draft” and the published version of the IARC monograph on glyphosate (more precisely Chapter 3, the only one for which a draft is publicly available), there are several modified sections, always in the same direction: comments mentioning that the studies did not conclude to the carcinogenic nature of glyphosate were deleted and replaced by language stating that the working group had not been able to evaluate this study or presented an opposite conclusion to IARC. Examples:

**Draft version**

Non-significant increases in tumour incidences versus controls
16 were noted for skin keratoacanthoma in high-dose males, and mammary gland fibroadenoma
17 in low- and mid-dose females. [The authors concluded that glyphosate was not carcinogenic
18 in Sprague Dawley rats].

**Published report**

Non-significant increases in tumour incidences compared with controls were noted for skin keratoacanthoma in males at the highest dose, and for fibroadenoma of the mammary gland in females at the lowest and intermediate doses.
[The Working Group was unable to evaluate this study because of the limited experimental data provided in the review article and supplemental information.]

**Draft version**

and the incidence of renal tubule

23 adenoma or carcinoma (combined) was 1/49 (2%), 0/49 (0%), 1/50 (2%), 3/50 (6%). The report
24 from the PWG also indicated they firmly believe and unanimously concur with the original
25 pathologist that the incidences of renal tubule-cell neoplasms in this study are not compound
26 related. [The IEMA (1993) stated they did not feel that this lesion was compound related.]

**Published report**

and the incidence of adenoma

or carcinoma (combined) of the renal tubule was 1/49 (2%), 0/49, 0/50 (0%), 3/50 (6%) [P = 0.034,
trend test for combined]. [The Working Group considered that this second evaluation indicated a significant increase in the incidence of rare tumours, with a dose-related trend, which could be attributed to glyphosate. Chandra & Phil.]

Reuters attempted to interview members of the working group about these changes. IARC did not answer any questions. Instead, IARC explained on its website that these drafts were “confidential”:

“Members of the IARC Monograph Working Group which evaluated glyphosate in March 2015 have expressed concern after being approached by various parties asking them to justify scientific positions in draft documents produced during the Monographs process. IARC would like to reiterate that draft versions of the Monographs are deliberative in nature and confidential. Scientists should not feel pressured to discuss their deliberations outside this particular forum.”
TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The pieces provided here are just the tip of the iceberg that emerged from a lawsuit in the United States. Full transparency of the IARC would be needed to shed light on the reasons that led IARC to adopt a glyphosate classification that contradicted all other scientific and regulatory agencies’ conclusions.

It is sometimes argued that the difference between the IARC opinion and all other agencies could be due to the specific focus of IARC (IARC would consider the theoretical hazard, what one substance can do, the others the risk, what the substance actually does). In fact, all agencies are interested in both aspects. Moreover, this argument (risk vs. danger) is NEVER the IARC position in this case.

It should be determined whether the IARC’s opinion on glyphosate was biased by its working method and by the composition of its working group.

As it stands, it may be suspected that anti-pesticide ideological choices have resulted in a focused choice of members of the glyphosate working group, without the conflicts of interest of some being considered detrimental to the impartiality of the group.

Considering that this case may be the biggest scandal affecting a risk assessment agency, AN OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION IN EUROPE IS INDISPENSABLE (independent of any government having already endorsed IARC’s position).
Annexes

1. All risk assessment and regulatory agencies around the world have concluded that glyphosate poses no risk to applicators or consumers under normal conditions of use.

Read “What do global regulatory and research agencies conclude about the health impact of glyphosate?”

2. Ad published by a predatory lawyer firm

A similar announcement on the site of another law firm
https://www.baumhedlundlaw.com/toxic-tort-law/monsanto-roundup-lawsuit/

If you have been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma after being exposed to Roundup weed killer and would like more information about whether you might have a potential Roundup lawsuit, please contact a personal injury attorney at Baum, Hedlund, Aristei & Goldman by filling out the contact form below.
with explicit reference to the IARC classification (here called WHO, its head organization):

In March of 2015, the World Health Organization surveyed the research on Roundup cancer links and concluded the blockbuster herbicide is “probably carcinogenic to humans.” Research shows that Monsanto has known that Roundup weed killer is carcinogenic for several decades, but buried the risks as sales of Roundup continued to skyrocket in the United States and abroad.