

Devra Davis

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Devra Lee Davis, (born June 7, 1946, Washington, DC) is an American epidemiologist and writer.^[1] The daughter of Harry B. and Jean Langer Davis, she was raised in Donora and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Davis is internationally known for work on disease prevention and environmental health factors. She served as the President Clinton appointee to the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board from 1994 to 1999, having won bipartisan Senate confirmation. She was Founding Director of the Center for Environmental Oncology, the first of its kind in the world, and presently acts as President of Environmental Health Trust, a non-profit organization focusing on drawing attention to man-made health threats. She lectures at American and European universities and her research has been covered in major scientific publications as well as being highlighted on major media outlets like CNN, CSPAN, CBC, BBC, and public radio.^{[2][3]} In recent years, her attention has become focused on the health hazards of exposures to man-made sources of electromagnetic radiation, especially those from wireless devices such as cell phones and iPads and the antennas and cell towers powering these devices all of which emit radio-frequency/microwave radiation. For example, on a recent trip (September/October 2014) to India, in order to raise awareness of this issue and to also promote "The Baby Safe Project,"^[4] she addressed the gamut of health effects -- from testicular dysfunction and breast cancer to childhood brain damage and digital dementia -- of wireless-radiation exposure.^{[5][6]}

While Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health and Human Services, she counseled leading officials of the United States, United Nations, European Environment Agency, Pan American Health Organization, World Health Organization, and World Bank.^[7]

She has also authored more than 190 publications in books and journals ranging from *The Lancet* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* to *Scientific American* and *The New York Times*, and writes for blogs such as Freakonomics in the New York Times, in *The Huffington Post* and elsewhere.^[7] She co-founded the Environmental Health Trust in 2007,^[7] with David Servan-Schreiber.

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Education

Davis graduated from Taylor Allderdice High School in 1964 and later received a B.S. and an M.A. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1967,^[1] where she held National Science Foundation fellowships as an honors undergraduate and graduate student. A former Scholar in Residence at the National Academy of Sciences, she completed her Ph.D. in science studies at the University of Chicago as a Danforth Fellow, and a M.P.H. at Johns Hopkins University as a National Cancer Institute post-doctoral fellow.^[1] She held post-doctoral positions with the National Science Foundation in the history, sociology, and philosophy of science at Catholic University in 1971, and with the World Man Fund and Lorenz K. Y Ng, MD at National Institutes of Health between 1975 and 1976.

Professional life

From 1970 to 1976, Davis was assistant professor of sociology at Queens College of City University of New York. Between 1982 and 2002 she was a faculty associate at Johns Hopkins University, Department of Health Policy and Management, School of Hygiene and Public Health.^[1] She's held a number of posts at universities around the world, and is currently Senior Distinguished Visiting Research Scholar in the WHO Collaborating Center for Capacity Building in Public Health at Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Public Health and Community Medicine.

Previous positions are as follows:

- *1985 Visiting Professor, Environmental Medicine, University of Madrid.*
- *1989 Visiting Scholar, Unit of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, School of Public Health, Hebrew University.*
- *1994–1999 Senior Scientist, Strang Cornell Cancer Prevention Center, New York, NY.*
- *1996-97 Gotteman Distinguished Professor, Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University, New York, NY.*
- *2000–2004 Visiting Professor, H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management, Carnegie Mellon University; Pittsburgh, PA.*
- *2000–2004 Honorary Professor, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, England.*
- *2001 Visiting Professor, Oberlin College, Department of Environmental Studies, Oberlin, Ohio.*
- *2004–10 Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.*

She served as a visiting scholar at Hebrew University, School of Public Health, Unit of Occupational and Environmental Medicine in 1989.^[1]

She was the founding director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute^[7] from 2004 to 2010. The multidisciplinary center included experts in medicine, basic research, engineering, and public policy, and who developed cutting-edge studies to identify the causes of cancer and propose policies to reduce the risks of the disease. She was also founding director of the National Academies of Sciences, Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology of the U.S. National Research Council, from 1983 to 1993, and served as Scholar in Residence from 1990 to 1993.

Other professional activities

A member of both the American Colleges of Toxicology and of Epidemiology,^[7] Davis was also a visiting professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City,^[1] appointed by Irving Selikoff, a founder of occupational medicine in 1988, until that appointment was terminated by Philip Landrigan in 2010. In addition, she was a visiting scientist of the Strang Cornell Cancer Prevention Center of Rockefeller University in 1994.^[1] She also advised the World Health Organization in developing its program on environmental health indicators and children's environmental health, and traveled with the United Nations Development Program to China to advise on programmatic issues.

She served as a member of the Board of Scientific Counselors of the U.S. National Toxicology Program between 1983 and 1986^[7] and was a member of the Presidio Advisory Committee to the U.S. government, and a Steering Committee member of the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program.

In 2001, Davis became one of the founders of the Green Zionist Alliance: The Grassroots Campaign for a Sustainable Israel^[8] and was part of the Green Zionist Alliance slate for elections for the World Zionist Congress in 2002.^[9]

Female health

Davis was Scientific Advisor to the Women's Environment and Development Organization in 1995.^[1] Davis was also a founding member of the International Breast Cancer Prevention Collaborative Research Group,^[1] an organization dedicated to exploring the avoidable causes of breast cancer. She, with Lloyd Morgan and Michael Kundi, recently reported on unexplained differences in brain tumors between men and women at the annual meeting of the Bioelectromagnetics Society.

Environment

Davis has served on the Board of the Climate Institute,^[1] the Coalition of Organizations on the Environment and Jewish Life,^[1] and the Earthfire Institute; and is a scientific adviser to the UK registered charity MobileWise.^[10] She also has advised Green America, Environmental Working Group, the Green Guide, and Healthy Child—non-profit organizations that promote environmental health. She occasionally discusses avoidable environmental health hazards on national and local programming with NPR, Fox News,

CNN, ABC, PBS, CBC, BBC,^[7] Dutch Public Television, and others.^[11] She also served as a Lead Author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the group awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with the Honorable Al Gore.^[7]

President Clinton appointed Davis to the newly established Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, an independent executive branch agency that investigates, prevents, and mitigates chemical accidents, where she served from 1994 to 1999.^[7]

She founded the non-profit Environmental Health Trust in 2007,^[7] with David Servan-Schreiber.

Controversies

Tackling publicly sensitive topics from tobacco, to asbestos to overuse of diagnostic radiation, Davis' findings and methods have been criticized,^[12] in some cases being called 'junk science,' especially for raising concerns about cellphone safety^{[13][14]} and climate change. She publicly criticized the prominent epidemiologist Sir Richard Doll, noting in her book *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* that his work discovering the link between tobacco and lung cancer in 1955 had been influenced by earlier German studies in the 1930s that he had not acknowledged. Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, reviewed Davis' work favorably in a lengthy analysis in *The New York Review of Books*, taking great exception, however, to her critique of Doll.^[15]

Awards

Davis was honored by the Betty Ford Comprehensive Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society with the Breast Cancer Awareness Award, commended by the Director of the National Cancer Institute for Outstanding Service, and appointed a Global Environmental advisor to *Newsweek Magazine*.^[7]

The recipient of a Women's Leadership Exchange Compass Award, presented by OPEN: The Small Business Network from American Express, for breaking the paradigms of how women are perceived, Davis received the first Lisa Zhang Environmental Award from the United Nations in July 2008.^[7]

In June 2009, Davis was honored with the Artemis Award presented by the Euro-American Women's Council and the Greek Foreign Ministry in recognition of her outstanding contributions to science and public health policy.^[7] In 2010, she was awarded the Carnegie Science Medal. In 2012, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Green America.^{[2][16]}

In 2012, she was listed on What's The 411 TV List of 25 Most Interesting People of 2012.^[17]

She was also awarded the Silver Medal from Nautilus Books for Courageous Reporting and chosen by Amazon editors as a top pick of 2014.^[2]

Private Life

Davis married economist Richard D. Morgenstern on October 19, 1975. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Publications

Davis' books have been translated into more than a dozen languages, including Chinese, Turkish, Finnish, Korean, Japanese, and Estonian. She was National Book Award finalist, for *When Smoke Ran Like Water*, 2002, which begins with the tale of the Donora Smog of 1948.^{[1][7]} Her 2007 book, *The Secret History of the War on Cancer*, details the ways that public relations strategies have undermined public health, and is being used at major schools of public health, including Harvard, Emory, and Tulane University.^[1]

Her book, *Disconnect*, published in September 2010, discusses the dangers of modern cell phone use and the ways in which the cell phone industry has gone to lengths to cover these up. A documentary film directed by Kevin Kunze, *Mobilize: A Film About Cell Phone Radiation* (2014), was co-written and co-produced by Davis.

Publications include the following:

- *Trends in Cancer Mortality in Industrial Countries (Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences)* (New York Academy of Sciences, 1990)^[1]
- *Urban Air Pollution Risks to Children: A Global Environmental Health Indicator* (World Resources Institute, 1999)^[1]
- *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception And the Battle Against Pollution* (Diane Publishing Company, 2002)
- *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* (Basic Books, 2007)^[1]
- *Disconnect: The Truth About Cell Phone Radiation, What the Industry Has Done to Hide It, and How to Protect Your Family* (Dutton Adult, 2010; paperback, Plume, 2011). Davis also co-produced the documentary film *Mobilize: A Film About Cell Phone Radiation* (2014) on cell phone radiation with Kevin Kunze.

Listening

- *Fresh Air* interview (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14986010>), October 4, 2007
- *Writer's Voice* interview (<http://www.writersvoice.net/2008/01/podcast-57-how-everyday-products-make-us-sick/>), January 2008
- *TVO (Ontario)* interview (http://www.tvo.org/TVO/WebObjects/TVO.woa?video?AG_Full_20081003_907694_DevraDavis), October 3, 2008. Length: 26:54
- Alan Gregg Canada <http://allangregg.tvo.org/episode/129397/devra-davis>, October 3, 2008

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- Kott, Ruth E (September–October 2010). "Roaming crusader" (<http://magazine.uchicago.edu/1010/features/c-vitae.shtml>). *C. vitae*. University of Chicago Magazine. Retrieved August 14, 2012.

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3. "Healthy Child, Devra Davis Bio" (<http://healthychild.org/about-us/devra-davis-phd-mph/>).
4. "Towards Better Health, Baby Safe Project, October 4, 2014" (<http://mieuxprevenir.blogspot.com/2014/10/india-dr-devra-davis-talks-about-baby.html>).
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9. "GZA 2002 charter delegate slate for the 34th World Zionist Congress" (<http://www.greenzionism.org/en/congress/slates/slate2002>). *Green Zionist Alliance*.
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14. Park, Bob (December 10, 2010). "What's New" (<http://bobpark.physics.umd.edu/WN10/wn121010.html>). Retrieved December 10, 2014.
15. Horton, Richard (March 6, 2008). "Cancer: Malignant Maneuvers" (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2008/mar/06/cancer-malignant-maneuvers/>). Retrieved December 10, 2014.
16. <http://www.greenbusinessnetwork.org/news/business-network-news/item/604-campaign-for-safe-cosmetics-devra-davis-win-green-america%E2%80%99s-bea-awards.html>
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(<http://www.whatsthe411.com/press/press-releases/288-what-s-the-411-tv-releases-list-of-most-interesting-people-of-2012.html>). What's the 411 TV. Retrieved December 20, 2012.

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External links

- Faculty Bio - Devra Davis (<http://www.epidemiology.pitt.edu/davis.asp>) at the Department of Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh
- Environmental Health Trust (<http://www.environmentalhealthtrust.org/>)

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