

DAVID CHERRY: WIND ENERGY AND ETHICS

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Editor's note: This commentary is by David A. Cherry, M.D., a retired surgeon and assistant clinical professor of surgery of the University of Connecticut who lives in Windham. He is a member of the Friends of Windham.

Assessing the need for industrial wind farms and their siting requires ethical values. The wind industry repeatedly dismisses the adverse health effects of living close to industrial wind farms. The claims are made on the fact that there have been few "peer reviewed" articles directly connecting adverse health outcomes to the proximity to wind farms. However there is a plethora of published complaints worldwide linking health complaints to living near wind farms.

As a physician I was intrigued by this discordance. My experience with human disease told me that we

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health have not been adequately studied. The lack of scientific information linking infrasound to adverse health outcomes may be because we are just beginning to understand the alterations in human physiology confronted with infrasound. There is a growing body of evidence that infrasound matters and may be the cause of negative health outcomes. Recent research suggests that the inner ear is capable of sensing infrasound and affecting the way we sleep, learn,

problem solve and interpret the environment around us. Some communities have recognized the existence of adverse health impacts and have begun to legislate to protect individuals.

Back to ethics. Why then are we in such a hurry to place wind farms so close to living organisms when there is a potential for an adverse outcome? Corporate and ethical responsibility no longer is a matter of how much money is donated to a person or a cause. Rather, ethical corporations should not adversely affect the environment and degrade human life. Instead of siting industrial wind close to populations, why not look to conservation and other renewables that don't have associated health complaints? Is it ethical to ask that some suffer while others prosper? I would argue no. I would argue my peers would agree when they review the emerging data.