

Humans 'will be implanted with microchips'

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By Josephine Asher, ninemsn

All Australians could be implanted with microchips for tracking and identification within the next two or three generations, a prominent academic says.

Michael G Michael from the University of Wollongong's School of Information Systems and Technology, has coined the term "uberveillance" to describe the emerging trend of all-encompassing surveillance.

"Uberveillance is not on the outside looking down, but on the inside looking out through a microchip that is embedded in our bodies," Dr Michael told ninemsn.

Microchips are commonly implanted into animals to reveal identification details when scanned and similar devices have been used with Alzheimers patients.

US company VeriChip is already using implantable microchips, which store a 16-digit unique identification number, on humans for medical purposes.

"Our focus is on high-risk patients, and our product's ability to identify them and their medical records in an emergency," spokesperson Allison Tomek said.

"We do not know when or if someone will develop an implantable microchip with GPS technology, but it is not an application we are pursuing."

Another form of uberveillance is the use of bracelets worn by dangerous prisoners which use global positioning systems to pinpoint their movements.

But Dr Michael said the technology behind uberveillance would eventually lead to a black box small enough to fit on a tiny microchip and implanted in our bodies.

This could also allow someone to be located in an emergency or for the identification of corpses after a large scale disaster or terrorist attack.

"This black box will then be a witness to our actual movements, words — perhaps even our thoughts — and play a similar role to the black box placed in an aircraft," he said.

He also predicted that microchip implants and their infrastructure could eliminate the need for e-passports, e-tags, and secure ID cards.

"Microchipping I think will eventually become compulsory in the context of identification within the frame of national security," he said.

Although uberveillance was only in its early phases, Dr Michael's wife, Katina Michael — a senior lecturer from UOW's School of Information Systems and Technology — said the ability to track and identify any individual was already possible.

"Anyone with a mobile phone can be tracked to 15m now," she said, pointing out that most mobile phone handsets now contained GPS receivers and radio frequency identification (RFID) readers.

"The worst scenario is the absolute loss of human rights," she said.

Wisconsin, North Dakota and four other states in the US have already outlawed the use of enforced microchipping.

"Australia hasn't got specific regulations addressing these applications," she said.

"We need to address the potential for misuse by amending privacy laws to ensure personal data protection."

Uberveillance has been nominated for Macquarie Dictionary's *Word of the Year* 2008.



This VeriChip microchip contains identity and health information and is embedded under the skin. (AAP)



A protest against microchip implants planned for Alzheimers patients in Florida. (AAP)

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