



## Microchips Linked to Cancer in Animals

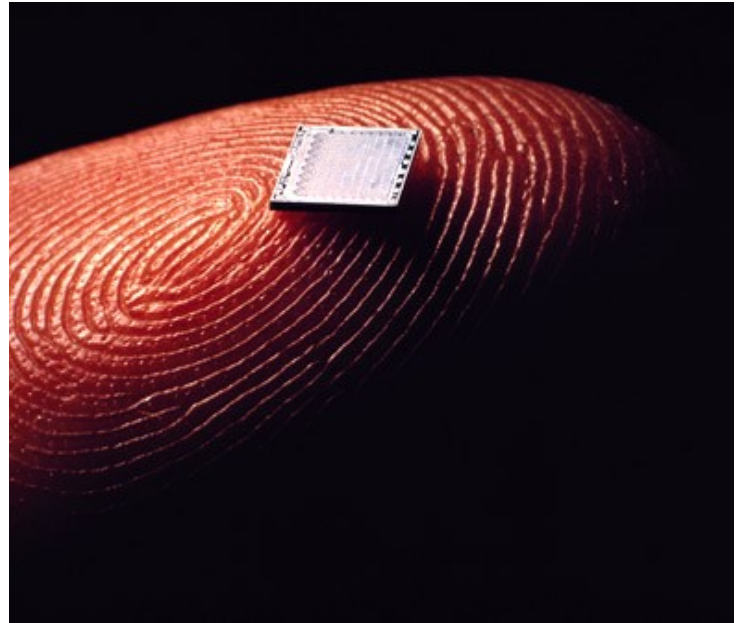
Study Raises Questions About Risks to Humans Who Have Had the Chips Implanted

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Microchips implanted in humans, a highly touted health care innovation, may actually be a health hazard, according to a new report.

The microchips, first implanted in pets, are encoded with information about the animal and are meant to get them home safely if lost. Those chips are now being implanted in some people, especially Alzheimer's patients, and encoded with their medical records. The Food and Drug Administration called the microchip one of 2005's top innovative technologies.

The microchips have been implanted in hundreds of people like Ida Frankel, who has Alzheimer's disease. If she gets lost and ends up in a hospital, doctors can scan her arm and get all of her medical records.



Implanted microchips would help keep track of people with Alzheimer's disease in case they get lost, but new concerns about the chips' safety have been raised.

(PhotoDisc)

But when the government approved these chips for use in humans three years ago, it didn't mention that there were studies showing that similar chips caused malignant tumors in lab rats and mice. Cancer doctors who spoke to The Associated Press, which broke this story, say you can't make the leap between cancer in mice and cancer in humans.

But Dr. Robert Benezra, the head of the Cancer Biology Genetics Program at Sloan-Kettering Hospital, said, "There's no way in the world, having read this information, that I would have one of those chips implanted in my skin."

The head of Verichip Corp., the company marketing the microchips to humans, said it had no idea about those studies.

"We recognize that we have a corporate responsibility to review these studies, to look at other studies, to do new studies if necessary, and do what is appropriate after reviewing all the information in all regards, and we intend to do this," said Scott Silverman, the chairman and CEO of Verichip.

Perhaps the more immediate concern is for household pets -- thousands of whom have had microchips implanted. One veterinarian, though, said the risk of a pet getting lost is much greater than the risk of cancer. "The risk of getting lost and ending up at the pound and maybe getting put to sleep is a bigger risk in the big picture," said Dr. Nicholas Dodman, of the Tufts Cumming School of Veterinary Medicine.

While the microchip's potential risks may be worth it for pets, doctors recommend further studies about the risks for humans.