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Workers in microchip implant trial

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16 February, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Workers in microchip implant trial

An American company has started piloting a controversial new programme aimed at increasing security. Three workers from CityWatcher.com, a surveillance equipment provider, have volunteered to be electronically monitored via a silicon chip implanted in their arms. A digital tagging device, the size of a grain of rice, has been injected into the biceps of the workers. These radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) will emit radio signals that will provide information to a central monitoring system that will allow the workers access to secure areas of the workplace. The chips were originally designed for medical purposes. Morgue workers used the chips after Hurricane Katrina to keep track of unidentified remains.

Sean Darks, CEO of CityWatcher, said the glass-encased chips were more like identity cards that are inserted inside the recipient's body. He said it was very different from Global Positioning Satellite technology, which allows the tracking and monitoring of a person's whereabouts. Mr. Darks insisted there was nothing sinister in the new trials and elected to be included as one of the first guinea pigs. In spite of his enthusiasm, many civil libertarians are expressing concerns over the issue of privacy. Many believe RFID technology has huge potential for abuse and that some time soon, serious decisions will have to be made by the judiciary. Mr. Darks remains unperturbed, reminding people that his workers can always opt to have the chips removed.

WARM-UPS

1. MICROCHIPS: Talk about microchips. List the things you have or own that contain them – What would life be like without these things? List the everyday things you see around you that contain microchips. What would happen if they all stopped working?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Piloting new programmes / controversy / security / surveillance / silicon chips / rice / radio waves / identity cards / GPS / guinea pigs / civil liberties / privacy / abuse

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. MY STORY: Look at the words in the “Chat” section above and create your own story. Do this with your partner(s). Use the words to predict what this lesson’s article will be about. Change partners and compare your stories. Who do you think will be closest to the real story?

4. TRACKING: Do you think implanting microchips in people to track them is a good idea? What are the benefits (or otherwise) of inserting chips in the following people?

- Employees
- Presidents and Prime Ministers
- People with criminal records
- Children
- Grandmothers
- Doctors
- Soldiers
- Boyfriends / Girlfriends / Partners...

5. OPINIONS: Do you agree with these opinions on microchips?

- a. Microchips have made the world a nicer place.
- b. Microchips will be replaced by a newer and smaller technology.
- c. Everyone should have a microchip implanted in his/her body.
- d. Microchip implants will one day mean we do not need to carry cash.
- e. Microchips will create a totally state-controlled society.
- f. I want a microchip in my loved ones so I can track their whereabouts.
- g. Microchip implants are essential to track former criminals and keep society safer.
- h. Criminal activity would increase if people were implanted with microchips.
- i. Society would move quicker if we were all fitted with microchips.

6. SURVEILLANCE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “surveillance”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Workers are in court for implanting microchips into colleagues. | T / F |
| b. Surveillance company staff are piloting a microchip tracking device. | T / F |
| c. Workers have had microchips implanted into their biceps. | T / F |
| d. The same chips were used to track the remains of hurricane victims. | T / F |
| e. The chips are the same size as regular identity cards. | T / F |
| f. The chips work in an identical way to GPS technology. | T / F |
| g. The surveillance company CEO has agreed to be a guinea pig in tests. | T / F |
| h. Civil libertarians are concerned about privacy issues. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. piloting | trailing |
| b. implanted | courts |
| c. tagging | bodies |
| d. emit | location |
| e. remains | menacing |
| f. encased | trying out |
| g. whereabouts | send out |
| h. sinister | unconcerned |
| i. judiciary | inserted |
| j. unperturbed | surrounded |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| a. started piloting | into the biceps of the workers |
| b. volunteered to be electronically | by the judiciary |
| c. the size of a grain | designed for medical purposes |
| d. injected | a controversial new programme |
| e. The chips were originally | unperturbed |
| f. the glass-encased chips were | to have the chips removed |
| g. elected to be included as one of | monitored via a silicon chip |
| h. serious decisions will have to be made | of rice |
| i. Mr. Darks remains | the first guinea pigs |
| j. his workers can always opt | more like identity cards |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Workers in microchip implant trial

An American company has started _____ a controversial new programme aimed at increasing security. Three workers from CityWatcher.com, a surveillance equipment _____, have volunteered to be electronically _____ via a silicon chip implanted in their arms. A digital tagging device, the size of a _____ of rice, has been injected into the biceps of the workers. These radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) will _____ radio signals that will provide information to a central monitoring system that will allow the workers access to _____ areas of the workplace. The chips were originally designed for medical _____. Morgue workers used the chips after Hurricane Katrina to keep track of unidentified _____.

monitored
purposes
piloting
secure
grain
remains
provider
emit

Sean Darks, CEO of CityWatcher, said the _____ - encased chips were more like identity cards that are inserted inside the _____ body. He said it was very different from Global Positioning Satellite technology, which allows the _____ and monitoring of a person's whereabouts. Mr. Darks insisted there was nothing _____ in the new trials and elected to be included as one of the first _____. In spite of his enthusiasm, many civil libertarians are expressing concerns over the issue of _____. Many believe RFID technology has huge potential for abuse and that some time soon, serious decisions will have to be made by the judiciary. Mr. Darks _____ unperturbed, reminding people that his workers can always _____ to have the chips removed.

remains
recipient's
guinea pigs
tracking
opt
glass
privacy
sinister

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Workers in microchip implant trial

An American company has started _____ a controversial new programme aimed at increasing security. Three workers from CityWatcher.com, a _____ equipment provider, have volunteered to be electronically monitored via a silicon chip _____ in their arms. A digital tagging device, the size of a grain of rice, has been injected into the _____ of the workers. These radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) will _____ radio signals that will provide information to a central monitoring system that will allow the workers access to _____ areas of the workplace. The chips were originally designed for medical purposes. Morgue workers used the chips after Hurricane Katrina to keep track of unidentified _____.

Sean Darks, CEO of CityWatcher, said the glass-_____ chips were more like identity cards that are inserted inside the recipient's body. He said it was very different from Global Positioning Satellite technology, which allows the tracking and monitoring of a person's _____. Mr. Darks insisted there was nothing _____ in the new trials and elected to be included as one of the first guinea pigs. In _____ of his enthusiasm, many civil libertarians are expressing concerns over the issue of privacy. Many believe RFID technology has huge potential for _____ and that some time soon, serious decisions will have to be made by the judiciary. Mr. Darks remains _____, reminding people that his workers can always _____ to have the chips removed.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'silicon' and 'chip'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "MICROCHIP" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about microchips, security and privacy.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| • piloting | • glass |
| • provider | • different |
| • arms | • sinister |
| • emit | • privacy |
| • medical | • abuse |
| • remains | • opt |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you ever think about where we'd be without microchips?
- c. What are microchips?
- d. How many microchips do you think are around you right now?
- e. Do you think the world is a better place because of microchips?
- f. What do you think of the idea of having microchips implanted in your body to serve as an identity card?
- g. What dangers do you see in implanting microchips in people's bodies?
- h. What laws do you think should be made to protect people from abuses of microchip implants?
- i. Do you think it's a good idea to implant children with microchips so parents can keep track of their whereabouts?
- j. Can you see a future in which all members of society must have a microchip implanted into their body?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think the scheme being piloted is a good one?
- d. Would you volunteer to take part in such a scheme?
- e. Would you prefer to have a microchip implant instead of carrying a wallet?
- f. Microchip implants in the future could enable a cashless, cardless, keyless society. What do you think of this?
- g. Microchip implants could be mobile phones and storage for personal information, photos, movies and music. What do you think of this?
- h. Do you think civil libertarians are fighting a losing battle when it comes to the digital revolution and privacy issues?
- i. Do you see anything sinister in the microchip implants?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

IMPLANTS: In pairs / groups, talk about the usefulness of having a microchip implanted in your body. Do you think the pros outweigh the cons in the following cases?

	PROS	CONS
Tracking people's whereabouts		
Society's safety		
No need for keys		
Permanent storage for digital data (info, photos, songs...)		
On-the-spot information for medics in emergencies		
Traffic safety		
Easier shopping		

Change partners / groups. Tell each other what your previous partner(s) said. Decide whether you are in favor or against implanting all members of society.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about microchip implants. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. PRIVACY: Write the new United Nations Convention on Microchip Implants. Include in it what can and cannot be stored on microchips implanted into people's bodies and for what purposes the chips can be used. Show your convention to your partner(s) in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. MY CHIP: Your government has implanted a microchip in your body. You don't know the real reasons why. Write a letter to your government explaining your thoughts. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. piloting	trying out
b. implanted	inserted
c. tagging	trailing
d. emit	send out
e. remains	bodies
f. encased	surrounded
g. whereabouts	location
h. sinister	menacing
i. judiciary	courts
j. unperturbed	unconcerned

PHRASE MATCH:

a. started piloting	a controversial new programme
b. volunteered to be electronically	monitored via a silicon chip
c. the size of a grain	of rice
d. injected	into the biceps of the workers
e. The chips were originally	designed for medical purposes
f. the glass-encased chips were	more like identity cards
g. elected to be included as one of	the first guinea pigs
h. serious decisions will have to be made	by the judiciary
i. Mr. Darks remains	unperturbed
j. his workers can always opt	to have the chips removed

GAP FILL:

Workers in microchip implant trial

An American company has started **piloting** a controversial new programme aimed at increasing security. Three workers from CityWatcher.com, a surveillance equipment **provider**, have volunteered to be electronically **monitored** via a silicon chip implanted in their arms. A digital tagging device, the size of a **grain** of rice, has been injected into the biceps of the workers. These radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) will **emit** radio signals that will provide information to a central monitoring system that will allow the workers access to **secure** areas of the workplace. The chips were originally designed for medical **purposes**. Morgue workers used the chips after Hurricane Katrina to keep track of unidentified **remains**.

Sean Darks, CEO of CityWatcher, said the **glass**-encased chips were more like identity cards that are inserted inside the **recipient's** body. He said it was very different from Global Positioning Satellite technology, which allows the **tracking** and monitoring of a person's whereabouts. Mr. Darks insisted there was nothing **sinister** in the new trials and elected to be included as one of the first **guinea pigs**. In spite of his enthusiasm, many civil libertarians are expressing concerns over the issue of **privacy**. Many believe RFID technology has huge potential for abuse and that some time soon, serious decisions will have to be made by the judiciary. Mr. Darks **remains** unperturbed, reminding people that his workers can always **opt** to have the chips removed.