

Technology's latest to the service of health ^[1]

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By Huaralí Reyes Avilés / huarali.reyes@elnuevodia.com ^[2] endi.com ^[3] Where is she? Did he leave the house? Is she lost? These are some of the questions that day to day oppress to thousands of relatives of Alzheimer patients, whose main preoccupation is the security of their loved ones who, little by little, lose their mental faculties. For that reason doctor Joaquin Davila Cintrón will allow his wife Maria del Carmen Quiñones Silva, to have implanted a microchip that will facilitate her identification and medical treatment in case of an emergency or that she gets lost, as usually happens in the last stages of this disease. "Mainly it is a safety measure", expressed to El Nuevo Dia, the physician, resident of Guayama, who will participate this Thursday of the first microchip implantation activity in 10 patients at the Alzheimer Federation of Puerto Rico. The device that will be used by Quiñones Silva is manufactured by the American company Verichip Corporation, that has begun to distribute it in several countries with medical and security purposes. The cristal capsule is as long as a rice grain and it is implanted with a hypodermic needle under the skin of the forearm. It does not leave scar and it has a cost of \$200. It contains a codified number of 16 digits that allow several uses and it is read with a scanner. The device works by radio frequency identification technology, better-known as RFID, that detects the location of the object or person who has it implanted or connects with a data base located in the United States in which the medical information of the person is filed. "Alzheimer is a cruel disease", said Davila Cintrón, who explained to Carmen, who he married 29 years ago, what is the 'verichip', its benefits and the procedure to implant it. Carmen has three children and 56 years of age. Befote being diagnosed with this illness in 2002, she helped her husband in his office for a while and the became a full time housewife. During the initial phase of the condition, as it is common, she refused to accept that she was losing her memory. "At the beginning going to work was a mess. She even burned the microwave", indicated the doctor, who assures that he keeps

his strength to fight the situation with love, sense of responsibility and principles. Currently, Carmen is in an advanced stage of the disease, but still has not completely lost her faculties. She has not run away or got lost because she has a person who takes care of her while her husband is working. But all patients don't have this benefit, emphasized Awilda Cividanes, president of the Alzheimer Federation of Puerto Rico. According to her, who is also a professor at the Inter-American University, there's a phase in which the patient "gets lost in his/her surroundings although it's where they have lived during 20 years". Sometimes they go out and they do not know how to return to their homes, "that is called to wander", she added. "They can spend several days missing and people treat them like homeless. Sometimes they end up in Police stations or psychiatric hospitals", emphasized Cividanes. For that reason she considers that 'Verichip' can provide physical and emotional security to the patient and relatives. "Many relatives must go to work and the patients stay alone or with people of the same age, who do not have the ability to take care of them. They cannot either lock them inside because it could be mistreatment or a kind of negligence" detailed the president of the Alzheimer Federation. In Puerto Rico the device will initially be used with medical purposes, although it is also used for security. 'Verichip' could also be useful for patients with diabetes, high pressure and other conditions that might need urgent medical attention.

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