

Scientists want MRI to read minds

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A magnetic resonance imaging machine at the University of Illinois at Chicago tracks neurons in a way that reveals how real-time thoughts form, a report says.

The Chicago Tribune said the machine is one of the world's most advanced MRI machines. Scientists said the machine's ability to reveal real-time thoughts by tracking the firing of individual neurons in the brain could lead to a major breakthrough in the diagnosis of strokes, autism, Alzheimer's and other disorders.

But Dr. Keith Thulborn, director of UIC's Center for MR Research, which houses the machine, said the main goal is to find out what people are thinking.

"We'd like to get to the stage of reading thoughts," he said.

Although there could be positive implications for such a measure, ethical questions are already arising, reported the Tribune.

Martha Farah, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, said she has worries over how people may use such technology.

"People may be thrown in jail for being suspected terrorists on the basis of a brain scan," she told the Tribune. "Some kid may be put in the wrong educational track on the basis of a brain scan."

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