

# A 'check engine' light for the human body?

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Imagine a sensor implanted in your body that signals when you're getting sick -- almost like the "check engine" light in a car. That scenario sounds like pure fantasy, but it may be closer to reality than many people think, according to an article in the current edition of Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN), ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

In the article, C&EN Associate Editor Britt E. Erickson describes one such medical device that's heading for clinical trials, perhaps later in 2011. It is a robotic arm that moves almost like a natural arm, thanks to a control system that monitors brain activity via a biosensor implanted on the surface of a patient's brain. That project aims to provide better artificial arms for wounded soldiers.

The article describes how scientists and medical device regulators are working together to fast track approval of such "biosensors" and devices. Biosensors monitor changes in the body, often "disease markers" — proteins, genes and other biochemical substances involved in health and disease. And they raise a red flag when things go awry. CEN points out that scientific advances will be important in tapping the full potential of biosensors. Scientists must find new disease markers, for instance, and better materials for making biosensors so they work for long periods while implanted in the body.

**More information:** "Biosensors on the Fast Track". This story is available at [pubs.acs.org/cen/government/89/8911gov2.html](http://pubs.acs.org/cen/government/89/8911gov2.html)

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