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Are Bill Gates and the ID2020 Coalition Using COVID-19 To Build Global Surveillance State?

Conspiracy theorists misrepresent Bill Gates' funding of vaccination and digital-identity research as evidence of a nefarious global surveillance plan foretold in the Book of Revelation.

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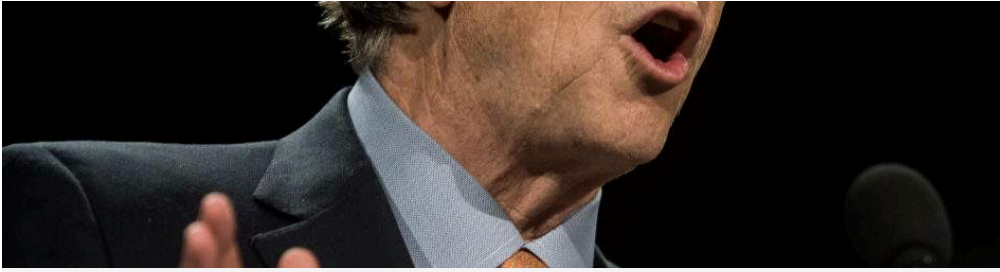
PUBLISHED 22 APRIL 2020 | UPDATED 8 JUNE 2020

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Claim

Bill Gates — along with a coalition dubbed "ID 2020" — seeks to "microchip" the world population using a COVID-19 vaccine.

Rating

False
About this rating ↗

Origin

As governments fight the COVID-19 pandemic, Snopes is **fighting** *an "infodemic" of rumors and misinformation, and you can help.* **Read** *our coronavirus fact checks.* **Submit** *any questionable rumors and "advice" you encounter.* **Become a Founding Member** *to help us hire more fact-checkers. And, please, follow the* **CDC** *or* **WHO** *for guidance on protecting your community from the disease.*

Microsoft founder Bill Gates is a rich man. He has put some of that wealth toward charitable organizations and initiatives through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. A **primary focus** of that foundation, and of Gates' philanthropy in general, is the reduction of inequalities in health outcomes, with a focus on the developing world. Via these organizations, he also funds research into technological solutions to public health problems in the poorest communities globally. **Since 2015**, he has been raising alarms about the world's potentially catastrophic lack of preparedness for a pandemic.

In part because of his advocacy for vaccines, Gates has also been a major recipient of the anti-vaccine movement's **vitriol** for well over a decade. Years of manufactured animosity built by false claims from these anti-vaccine groups have, as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, combined with the dubious claims of **doomsday soothsayers** and **cryptocurrency Youtubers** to create a sprawling COVID-19 conspiracy theory centered on Gates.

The basic allegation against Gates goes like this: He is using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to push a vaccine with a microchip capable of tracking you along with the rest of the world population.

The Quick Facts

From a factual standpoint, Gates has never proposed or funded research into the development of a vaccine — for COVID-19 or for anything else — that includes the injection of a device that could actively track your location, monitor anything you are doing, or "**control**" you.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation did fund a **pilot study** conducted by MIT and Rice University researchers into a potential vaccine-delivery device that could impart an invisible mark detectable by a smartphone. This study was theoretical, the technology described was passive, and the device was incapable of any sort of tracking or monitoring. Still, much of the credence lent to the false notion that Gates has designs to track you using vaccines comes from mixing the existence of that pilot study with another public health concept Gates is actively involved in researching called a "digital identity."

The **basic premise** behind a digital (or decentralized) identity in the context of Gates' work is simple: It would involve some sort of cloud-based storage of medical and/or personal-identification documents accessible only with the consent of the owner but available anywhere in the world. Crucially, such a concept, whose central scientific challenges are in the realm of encryption and blockchains, has nothing to do with anything injected into the body. Despite this, conspiracy theorists falsely use Gates' support for digital identity initiatives **as evidence** of his intentions to build a vaccine-enabled surveillance state.

What Bill Gates Has Actually Said About COVID-19

As someone who has funded general research into vaccines and pandemics, Gates has made several public statements on the present crisis. Broadly speaking, these statements reflect Gates' **commitment** to researching and developing both treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, and to stressing the need for a scalable method to quickly identify people who have either recovered from COVID-19 or received a vaccination against it as a means to restart the global economy. For example, in an **interview** with Chris Anderson, who runs TED Talks, Gates indicated he believes some sort of "immunity certificate" will be instrumental in reopening the global economy:

Eventually what we'll have to have is certificates of who's a recovered person and who's a vaccinated person, because you don't want people moving around the world where you'll have some countries that won't have it under control. Sadly. You don't want to completely block off the ability for those people to go there and come back and move around. So eventually there will be sort of this digital immunity proof that will help facilitate the global reopening up.

In a Reddit "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) discussion from **March 2020**, Gates further **detailed** his views on disease surveillance in the United States:

The testing in the US is not organized yet. In the next few weeks I hope the government fixes this by having a website you can go to to find out about home testing and kiosks. Things are a bit confused on this right now. In Seattle, the [University of Washington] is providing thousands of tests per day but no one is connected to a national tracking system. Whenever there is a positive test it should be seen to understand where the disease is and whether we need to strengthen the social distancing.

Gates has **praised** the more extreme disease-surveillance measures taken by South Korea as a model for future pandemic preparedness. South Korea has had considerable **success** in limiting deaths from COVID-19 thanks in large part to aggressive "contact tracing," described in an April 2020 **report** by the Brookings Institute:

South Korea was effective in tracing people who may have come into contact with those who tested positive for COVID-19. Nearly all South Korean citizens have smartphones and use credit cards, so when someone tests positive, the government can trace where they have been, at what time, and what mode of transportation they used. With this data, the government can trace the potentially infected population, using CCTV footage to identify potential contacts when needed. Those in close contact with the infected are asked to get tested, while indirect contacts are ordered to self-quarantine for fourteen days. This is an arduous process, but the South Korean government has maintained the ability to trace and contact potentially infected persons.

The theory that Bill Gates wants to use a vaccine to track people based on any of these statements or views is flawed for at least two reasons. First, nothing he has advocated for above necessitates injecting a tracking device into a body. Instead these theoretical technologies would rely on a combination of biometric identification, encryption, and cloud storage of data. Second, as shown by South Korea, the injection of tracking devices via vaccines would likely be a waste of time, given the fact that most of humanity is constantly connected to a GPS enabled smartphone that probably **knows more** about you than your parents.

Quantum Dot Tattoos in Vaccines

The sole bit of evidence used to suggest Bill Gates' interest in adding anything that resembles a microchip in vaccines stems from his foundation's funding of **a study**, published in Science Translational Medicine in December 2019, that "developed dissolvable microneedles that deliver patterns of near-infrared light-emitting microparticles to the skin" that can, when

exposed to certain frequencies of light, "identify the immunization status of infants." In several developing countries, a lack of reliable immunization records can, the authors argued, affect the quality of care provided.

The study — which was not conducted on human subjects — did not describe the injection of a "microchip" co-administered with a vaccine. Instead, it described the use of something referred to as a **quantum dot.** These dots are essentially molecule-sized particles engineered to have unique structures that react to near-infrared light in a way that could theoretically be identified by a device such as a smartphone. It is physically impossible to implant a quantum dot sized device that could actively ping location or any other data to an unknown third party.

Further, this sort of research — if it ever came to fruition in the first place — is in its infancy, and would be years away from actual implementation anywhere, let alone in a potential COVID-19 vaccine that scientists estimate could be available potentially within **18 months**. Nonetheless, this study is crucial to the conspiracy theory, as that narrative is dependent on conflating quantum dots with Gates' work in digital identities. That's why it is important to understand the misrepresentations made of the Gates-funded group **ID2020**.

Digital Identities and ID2020

ID2020, or the Digital Identity Alliance, is a **501c3** non-profit funded by a diverse range of foundations and corporate sponsors — including Microsoft and the Gates-funded vaccine non-profit GAVI — that **provides grants** for practical research into the real-world application of digital identities:

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> The ID2020 Alliance provides funding and other forms of material support for high-impact and high-quality digital identity projects that are privacy-protecting, user-centric, and designed for scale, impact, and replicability. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis at various stages of development. Any individual or organization meeting the required application and evaluation criteria is welcome to submit a proposal.

Several of the projects funded by ID2020 **have been** characterized by anti-vaccine activists as using the poor and vulnerable as scientific guinea pigs involving the implantation of a device that infringes on their privacy. Outside of the fact that none of these projects involve injecting subjects with anything, the philosophical premise implied by such claims is also in direct opposition to what ID2020 seeks to accomplish. Its goal, however lofty, is to develop a system in which the individual has complete control over personal identification or health documentation. The end product would be a system that allows this sort of information to be accessible anywhere in the world but only with your consent. The ID2020 **manifesto** makes this explicit:

Over 1 billion people worldwide are unable to prove their identity through any recognized means. As such, they are without the protection of law, and are unable to access basic services, participate as a citizen or voter, or transact in the modern economy. ... We believe that individuals must have control over their own digital identities, including how personal data is collected, used, and shared. Everyone should be able to assert their identity across institutional and national borders, and across time. Privacy, portability, and persistence are necessary for digital identity to meaningfully empower and protect individuals.

One pilot project associated with ID2020 is **MyPass**, which is an effort to provide digital identification to the homeless population of Austin, Texas. Though ID2020 is not funding MyPass, the City of Austin's Innovation office is an ID2020 partner, and ID2020 staff "did participate in a workshop with the city in June 2019," according to an ID2020 spokesperson. The project, still in its infancy, seeks to create an online, cloud-based repository of identification and medical documents. Early versions of the pilot study would likely use some combination of a QR code card given to participating individuals, but future work could involve biometrics like fingerprints or IRIS scans. Importantly, the participants in the study volunteered to be in it, can opt out at any time, and did not and will not have anything injected into them. Another **project**, currently active in Bangladesh and Tanzania, seeks to test the viability of tying infant fingerprints to digital identities.

These projects are small pilot studies with limited relevance to the current COVID-19 pandemic, and none of them involves injecting anything into anyone, let alone something that would

contain the functionality that would enable any sort of active tracking or surveillance. Still, conspiracy theorists have pushed the above facts into an unfounded but paranoid narrative.

How Conspiracy Theorists Falsely Interpret Gates' Work

As stated above, Bill Gates has been interested in using vaccines to combat health inequalities for over a decade. Though it has no relevance to the claims at issue for COVID-19, the assertion that Bill Gates' interest in vaccines stems from a goal of "depopulating" the world is almost **universally included** as part of that narrative as a means to imbue Gate's actions with nefarious intent. That **false conclusion** stems from a grotesque misreading of Gates' **argument** that communities with access to vaccination tend to have lower birth rates because reduced childhood mortality means more children will survive into adulthood.

As also discussed above: Gates has been interested in, and financially supportive of, the concept of digital identification as another means of reducing health inequality globally. The narrative pushed by conspiracy theorists involves conflating the concept of a digital identification with the injection of a device. For example, appearing in an interview by far-right Christian conspiracy theorist Rick Wiles' on his TruNews platform, a guest **asserted** without evidence that both concepts were directly related:

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What Bill Gates said was eventually we will have some
digital certificates to show who has recovered, who has
been tested ... and we will have [a record of who] received [a
COVID-19] through that digital certificate. Now that digital
certificate might just sound like something simple. Maybe
it's a computer document. That's not exactly what's going
on here. .... This project has researchers at MIT and Rice
University with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates
foundation working to create that digital certificate system.
It's going to be a chip that actually is implanted into
humans.

As previously explained, the MIT/Rice study was not
conducted by the ID2020 alliance, and ID2020-funded
projects are not experimenting with injecting things into
people. Natural News, a supplement store and alternative
health conspiracy blog, similarly **conflated** digital identity
with quantum dot technology to portray Gates as an agent of
Satan:

Keep in mind that this all coincides with the ID2020 agenda, which aims to create a global digital identification system for every person on Earth. As we've reported in the past, ID2020 and vaccines are being used together to harvest the biometric identities of all mankind, and all for the purpose of creating the global system of tracking and control that was foretold in the book of Revelation.

They've already begun to test ID2020 in Bangladesh, inserting digital IDs in the bodies of newborn babies along with their vaccinations. And Bill Gates is now talking about how so-called "quantum dot tattoos" are the next wave of biometrics identification, also to be inserted in people's bodies through vaccination.

Ignoring the fact that ID2020 is not a product capable of being "tested," the Bangladesh **project** Natural News references here does not involve dead babies, nor does it involve the "insertion" of anything into anyone. It's an exercise in imaging infant fingerprints.

The Bottom Line

In sum, the contention that Gates is using COVID-19 as a pretense to inject monitoring devices into humans relies on a misrepresentation of the research he has funded, the methods those projects have employed, and confusion over what a "digital identity" seeks to achieve. If and when a vaccine for COVID-19 comes, it will not be capable of tracking your movements or reporting any data to any entity whatsoever. None of the technology discussed by Gates here is even capable of such a task.

Pandemics are global catastrophes with few easy answers. Gates, a private citizen with no ability to mandate policy or govern international health organizations, has spent over a

decade funding research into various strategies that could mitigate their effect. His ideas, though supported by many scientists, are not decrees. Instead, his focus has been on understanding the likely viability and efficacy of various counter-pandemic and public health strategies. These initiatives have been blended into a false narrative involving an as-yet-undeveloped COVID-19 vaccine combined with a made-up microchip device unlike anything Gates has ever been involved in. As such, the claim that Gates is planning to microchip you via a COVID-19 vaccination is false.

Correction [8 June 2020]: An earlier version stated that ID2020 funds the City of Austin's MyPass program. We have updated the text to clarify that ID2020 is not funding that program, but that their staff once held a workshop to help the City of Austin develop the program.

LAST UPDATED 8 JUNE 2020

PUBLISHED 22 APRIL 2020

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FILED UNDER COVID-19

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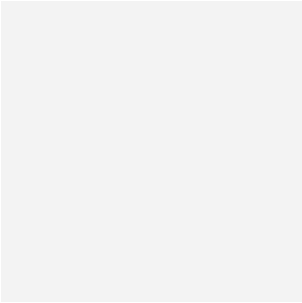
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