

THE FIRST SURGICAL TRANSPLANT !

AMHA MEKASHA, MD*

In modern medicine organ transplantation is a common procedure in many medical centers. But when did the first surgical transplant start ? Here is an excerpt from the WEEKLY WORLD NEWS, April 24, 1984.

INCREDIBLE GRAPHIC EVIDENCE PROVES THAT....

The first human transplant was performed 500 years ago! Startling graphic evidence has been uncovered proving that transplant surgery isn't the modern medical miracle we believe it to be it was actually practiced centuries ago! That astonishing evidence, which set the medical world back on its heels, can be found at the altar of a quiet little chapel in a cathedral in Palencia, Spain.

There, on the exquisitely carved panels behind the altar, are 15th century physicians depicted transplanting a leg from one man to another. The recipient of the transplanted leg is white nobleman of the late 1400s. The carving shows him with his new limb firmly attached, while, a few feet away, the black donor, his left leg neatly amputated above the knee, lies slumped against a wall.

* Jimma Institute of Health Sciences,
Department of Pediatrics,
P.O.Box, Jimma, Illubabor

Right behind the unconscious slave, who no doubt died, the physician's assistant is shown holding the nobleman's diseased leg which had been amputated only minutes before the transplant. The amazing sculpture is believed to be the work of the famous spanish artist Berruguette. It has only been since the advances in modern heart, liver, kidney and lung transplantation that the carving has come under close study.

"Medical and surgical experts are flocking here from all over the world just to see with their own eyes what the sculpture reveals," chapel priest Don Asterio Moro told The NEWS.

" It had always been assumed that the carving illustrated a miracle. But miracles are the work of a merciful God. He would never bring misery and suffering to one person for the benefit of another.

" No. Even the skeptics who come here admit that it is a reenactment of a surgical transplant procedure that must have taken place about 500 years ago.

" It is primitive and barbaric, to be sure. But so were the revolutionary techniques used in the brain surgery practiced by the physicians of Egypt and other early civilizations.

" There has recently been discovered the bones of a Neanderthal man who appears to have undergone a successful leg amputation. Why then would it be so impossible for physicians of the 15th century to perform limb transplants?"

A German surgeon, Dr. Hans Wolfgast, made a detailed study of the nobleman's severed leg and concluded that the surgeons in the carving had replaced a critically diseased limb.

"The sculpture is magnificent in its detail," Wolfkast said.

"The surgeons in the sculpture obviously were trying to save the life of a wealthy and titled individual at the expense of a mere slave.

"Since there is no other known art depicting a similar procedure, I would have to say that the sculpture definitely illustrates the first surgical transplant in history."

BOOK REVIEWS

The Medical Teacher. Edited by Lenneth R. Cox and Christine E. Ewan. New York: Churchill Livingstone, Reprinted 1985, preface, pp 248.

The book emphasises the theoretical and practical application of current knowledge of teaching/learning process. As outlined in the preface, the Medical Teacher attempts to present eight basic questions which may be asked by any teacher for facilitating teaching/learning process in the classroom. These pressing questions are treated comprehensively by education scholars. Thus the editors have provided the book to link forty-five findings which deal with the aspects of education across diverse settings in the medical instructional system.

The book is divided into five categories that cover most topics regarding the five inseparable components of teaching-learning aspects: The learner, The teacher, The method, The resources, and The assessment of Student Performance. Each section deals with specific function of their own process model. And major strengths and weaknesses of different methods are also provided.

There is a brief introduction for every section to help the reader comprehend the specific function of each topic. The topics themselves are written in a quasi-outline style, apparently designed to speed the findings of the key points. The contributors use diagrams, tables, charts, photographs and graphs to make easily assimilated, and used by those who apply them.