

# Face Transplantation: Someone Else's Face in the Mirror

In November of 2005, Isabelle Dinoir became the first recipient of an experimental procedure -- a face transplantation. Since that time, 11 other face transplantations have been performed and questions of identity, public acceptance and innovative surgery still remain.

Friday, July 9, 2010

## Face Transplant #12 -- Surgeon Laurent Lantieri

On June 26th French Sugeon Laurent Lantieri conducted the 12th face transplantation on an anonymous patient with an undisclosed medical condition. As remarkable as all the face transplantations have been to date, this operation broke new ground with the addition of eye lids as part of the facial allograft. The eyes, in a way, have become the fulcrum on which the future of face transplants sit.

The eyes are surgically difficult to navigate for a couple of reasons. First, imagine the challenges for the face transplant patient if the eyelids never become mobile. Typically it can take 6 months to animate the face in a satisfactory manner, e.g. smiling, speaking, etc. Surgeons have been wary of replacing the eye lids not only because it can take up to a year to develop adequate facial movement in the transplanted tissue, but also because if the nerves never generate proper movement, the patient will be left with a significant visual deficit -- not a enviable position. Thus far, as with the case of chimpanzee attack victim Charla Nash, surgeons have not wanted to conduct face transplantations on the severely visually impaired. Nash is an interesting test case in the US. Rejected by the Cleveland Clinic, she has now relocated to Boston and is currently being evaluated by famed surgeon Bohdan Pomahac. What makes Charla's story even more remarkable is that she was not only blinded by the rogue primate, she possess no eyes -- yet she desires a transplanted face.

What is the meaning of a face? Why might a blind woman desire a transplanted face if she will never be able to see it? Face transplantation in many ways raises the everything question: who are we? Here will be explored the meaning of face, losing face and gaining face. How has this innovative procedure that is slowly gaining acceptance in the the surgical world -- watch Boston Med. Thursday nights at 10PM to see the story of face transplant recipient James Maki -- forcing us all to consider what it means to have a facial identity, lose it, and desire the face of another.

In the meanwhile, the most recent face transplant recipient has been reported to cry tears through his transplanted tear ducts . . .

Posted by Carla Bluhm, Ph.D. at 10:43 AM 0 comments

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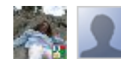
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- ▶ 2011 (1)
- ▼ 2010 (4)
  - ▶ October (1)
  - ▶ August (2)
  - ▼ July (1)
    - Face Transplant #12 -- Surgeon Laurent Lantieri

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Dr. Bluhm is the co-author with Nathan Clendenin of the first book published on face transplantation called "Someone Else's Face in the Mirror: Identity and the New Science of Face Transplants" (Praeger Publishers, 2009).

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