

Points noted around events in 1967

The tenacity

The amount of preparation to ensure success (relative to the actual event)

The talent of Hamilton Naki, a black uneducated laboratory assistant, and his key role in organ transplant research

How others in the field must have felt, particularly as Christiaan Barnard (CB) had also spent some time learning skills in the US

The rush to replicate the feat in other institutions worldwide

Legal differences in the US and South Africa at that time

CB took the opportunity and with 'more flexible' criteria for pronouncement of death, he went ahead quietly and performed the operation within the law in South Africa

Heated debate at the time regarding the use of stray dogs to perfect surgical skills

Some religious views

Perceptions of the heart and the 'soul'

Reactions: media, religion, rivalry and sometimes bitterness

Initial success

18 days later the recipient died of pneumonia

Subsequent successes from the same team and other teams in institutions elsewhere in the world

The emotions of the man, Christiaan Barnard

CB described the feeling of the enormity of what he had just done, at the moment he viewed the cavity where the donor heart had been removed

Sudden celebrity status and the impact on CB, his life and his relationships

The donor, recipient, families; surgical, technicians and care-teams

Messages that still ring true today

The tenacity required in research

The amount of preparation to ensure success

Untapped talents in societies

Talents and potential missed through lack of education and opportunity

The competitive nature of research

Legal aspects

Differences in different countries

Ethical and moral implications in research

Reactions to scientific breakthroughs

The highs and lows of research

The importance of bouncing back and learning

Scientists as people

Beware the lure of fame

Many perspectives in research

Finally, for newcomers starting out in research:

Research is still a complex arena with many potential issues to consider. This is particularly evident in the context of 'breakthroughs'.

Be aware of the broader issues and also all the positive aspects today: researchers who are passionate about their subjects; dedication and willingness to collaborate; public awareness and genuine interest in Life Sciences.

Success requires tenacity, hard work and opportunity. Life Sciences and medical research are truly fascinating.

by Julie Charlesworth