

TITLE: Transplantation of the Human Face: Ethical and Psychiatric Considerations

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ABSTRACT:

Successful composite tissue allotransplantation (CTA) has been accomplished with the human hand and larynx. Research and clinical consideration is now being given to possible transplantation of the human face for patients who have suffered severe disfigurement and are not candidates for other reparative surgery. At a recent international conference, confidence was expressed that the necessary microsurgical skills are already established but reservations were expressed about proceeding due to uncertainty about psychological effects on the recipient and donor family and the ethical issues related to the required immunosuppression. This article explores ethical considerations in transplantation of the human face, with a focus on the relevant transplantation psychiatric issues, including potential psychological benefits and risks. Four principles of biomedical ethics are considered: respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The audience will learn about the proposal for composite tissue allotransplantation of the human face.
2. The audience will learn about potential psychological benefits and risks of human face transplantation.
3. The audience will learn how transplantation psychiatry considerations inform the ethical issues of respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice for face transplant candidates.

QUESTIONS:

1. Human face transplantation will represent the first successful form of human composite tissue allotransplantation
2. Transplantation psychiatrists and social workers will play an important role in the pre- and post-transplant evaluation and treatment of face transplantation patients.

REFERENCES:

Siegler M. Ethical issues in innovative surgery: Should we attempt a cadaveric hand transplantation in human subject? *Transplantation Proceedings* 1998; 30: 2779-2782
 Beaucamp T, Childress J (Eds): *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, Fourth Edition. New York, Oxford. University Press, 1994, 546 pages.
 Kapheke M., Marcell C, Creamer B, et al. Psychiatric assessment of candidates for hand transplantation. *Microsurgery* 2000; 20:453-457.

ANSWERS: 1. False, 2. True