

Process Paper

When I was thinking about a topic for History Day, I had already decided that I wanted to pick a topic involving medicine. I came up with my official topic by researching different medical innovations and coming across the first organ transplant. This topic interested me because it made me wonder what the origins of organ transplantation are and how it works. It also interested me because when I was born, I had a multicystic dysplastic kidney, a condition which replaced my left kidney with multiple cysts, so I had no function in this kidney. Because of this, I was curious about what a kidney transplant would be like if I ever needed one.

My primary sources were newspapers, websites, and a book that featured input from Joseph Murray, Ronald Herrick, and other people involved with the operation. I also had an interview with Richard Herrick's daughter, Linda, who told me about the transplant and events she could not recall in her early childhood but had heard from her mother.

My secondary sources were articles covering earlier and later organ transplants, surgeries, and innovative medicines that weren't from the doctors, patients, or anyone around during the time they were done. A couple of my secondary sources were interviews with a teacher who had a double lung transplant and the doctor who performed the lung transplant.

When I was thinking about what I wanted my project to be, I considered two options. I either wanted to do an exhibit or a website. I eventually chose a website because I enjoy working with technology and thought it would be interesting to learn how to navigate the NHD website program. I started by collecting research from various websites that gave me information, such as medical factors that made the transplant possible, as well as doctors and medical professionals that contributed toward the first successful organ transplant. After I got my information, I put it into my website over the course of a couple of weeks.

My topic relates to “Frontiers in History” because it is about the first successful organ transplant in history, making it a medical frontier in history. It has impacted history greatly by changing methods of organ transplantation to increase transplantation’s effectiveness and by changing the way doctors perform other surgeries, as well as by introducing new methods of surgery. My topic has also impacted the world by extending the lives of thousands of patients with a need for a new organ.