

Print two sets of the following five cards (for groups A & C)

“Plenty of research exists to support the view that memories can only be stored in the brain. But could memories be stored in transplanted organs as well? Contemporary research suggests this may be possible, with investigations finding that memories can be stored in DNA, RNA, proteins, and epigenetic changes in cells outside the brain.”

– Mitchell Lester, psychiatrist

“There is no scientific model to account for why transplants might lead to transference of features.”

– Researchers Meredith Meyer, Sarah-Jane Leslie, Susan Gilman and Sarah Stilwell

“I found, bizarrely, I'd developed a sudden fondness for certain foods I hadn't liked before: Snickers bars, green peppers, Kentucky Fried Chicken takeaway. Was it possible that my new heart had reached me with its own set of tastes and preferences?... I'm not trying to prove anything. It's just my story and ... I'm telling it as it's happened to me.”

– Claire Sylvia, organ recipient

“I just don't believe that it carries on; that it passes from one person to another. I don't believe that there is a memory involved there.”

– Talkback radio caller

"We all have cellular memory as part of our adaptive immune responses that keeps us safe from disease, infection, and cancer. When I'm thinking of the strictly clinical function of an organ, I'm interested in: Is it squeezing blood around the body? Is the heart rhythm normal? Beyond that, it's hard for me to say whether there are other components to what a heart can offer, particularly from a donor that's not native to the recipient."

– Dr Michael McDonald, medical director at the Toronto General Hospital's Ajmera Heart Transplant Centre

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Print two sets of the following five cards (for groups B & D):

"Our culture sees the heart as the seat of life, love, the soul. There's no basis in science for this."

– John Wallwork, former director of transplant service for the U.K.'s National Health Service

"I believe there is memory in all of our organs. And when you take such a massive amount of tissue as heart and lungs and you put it from one person to another, something's got to come over with it. You've got the DNA, you've got the cellular structure in it, and it's the makeup of the whole person."

– Claire Sylvia, organ recipient

“I do like pickles now, so that might be a gift from my donor... Nobody can know whether it’s possible unless they’ve had that experience.”

– Anne Marie Switzer, organ recipient

“Although anecdotes do not prove personality changes occur as a result of organ transplantation, they do suggest the possibility of such changes, and provide a starting point for further explorations into this fascinating area of medical science.”

– Mitchell Lester, psychiatrist

“These incredible stories can easily arise because of selection bias. If a transplant patient suddenly matches their donor by sheer coincidence, their story will be shared a lot because it is interesting and it fits a certain type of magical thinking. If a transplant patient does not experience these changes in personality, that story is unlikely to travel far... This whole topic seems to encourage non-scientific thinking, where ancient ideas of devouring an enemy’s heart to gain his courage are now used to explain the changes a person goes through after nearly dying.”

– Jonathan Jarry, science communicator

Undermines the claim

Neutral

Supports the claim