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Henrietta Lacks and the Miraculous HeLa Cells

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HENRIETTA LACKS
And The Miraculous HE-La CELLS

Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks was born August 1, 1920 to Ms. Johnston and Mrs. Loretta Pleasant. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells were taken without her knowledge in 1951. Henrietta had five children (Lawrence, Elise, David Jr., Joe, and Deborah). She noticed a lump inside her stomach, but had no idea what it could be. She also bled even though it wasn't her time of the month. She went down to her local doctor and he just figured it was a sore from syphilis, but the lump tested negative for syphilis. Her local doctor suggested her to go to Johns Hopkins gynecology clinic. Jones had noticed the second time around a fully formed fetus. Few days later Jones got her biopsy results and Henrietta was diagnosed with "Epidermoid carcinoma of the cervix, Stage I." They set her up for radiation treatments. Weeks later Henrietta was charred from her breast to pelvis. Henrietta went in for surgery, and Dr. Gey ordered them to take samples of her cells without permission. Henrietta grew sicker as the day went by and on October 4, 1951 she passed away. "Her Cells ended up becoming one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more."

HeLa Cells

There seemed to be nothing special about Henrietta's life until her cells were taken. Cells were removed from her body without her family's permission. Doctors succeeded in growing her tumor cells in the laboratory. "HeLa cells" was the name for the cells grown in the laboratory. "HeLa cells" were used to study the following diseases:

- Lactose Digestion
- Mosquito Mating
- Human Longevity
- Appendicitis
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The Lacks Family

Twenty years had passed before Henrietta's children found out their mother's cells were still alive and had been used to create an entire branch of medical science. They never knew their family lived in poverty. Many of the Lacks family suffered many years from their sickness, because they had no money, and health insurance. They were also afraid to go to the hospital because of what happens to their mother. Doctors at Johns Hopkins and other hospitals often abducted black people at night for research. This was the second reason why they never went to the hospital. Scientists investigating HeLa began using Henrietta's husband and children in research with informed consent. The Lacks family never saw any of the profits, many of her family members struggled with health issues due to going years without health insurance.

Here's Your Chance To Donate!!

- If you would like to donate, you can make a donation to the Henrietta Lacks Foundation using a credit card or online bank transfer by clicking the "Donate" button on the website.
- You can also send your donation as a check or money order to: The Henrietta Lacks Foundation
  P.O. Box 6598
  Kent Island, MD 21653

To make a donation go to www.henriettalacksfoundation.org

Timeline

1899
- First computer patented

1920
- Henrietta Lacks was born August 1, 1920 in Rosedale.

1951
- Henrietta's cells were removed for medical research.

1952
- Dr. William Draper and Dr. Robert T. Weir extracted HeLa cells from Henrietta.

1953
- Dr. Robert T. Weir published the first report of HeLa cells.

1955
- Dr. Robert T. Weir published a second report on HeLa cells.

1973
- The United States Supreme Court ruled that no one can gain control of a cell line without its owner's permission.

1999
- The United States Supreme Court ruled that no one can gain control of a cell line without its owner's permission.

Photos of The Lacks Family

The Lacks Family

- Deborah, and the author Rebecca Skloot, 2006
- The Home in Church, Virginia where Henrietta was raised, a four room log cabin
- The Lacks Family
- Deborah, and the author Rebecca Skloot, 2006
- The Lacks Family

The Book

The book "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks" tells the riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine:
- scientific discovery
- the history of African Americans, the birth of biotech, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we're made of.
- the book is a bestseller
- it's a story intricately connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of biotech, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we're made of.

The Lacks Family

- Deborah, and the author Rebecca Skloot, 2006
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Lacks Town Road

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