

Dr, Robert J White

Dr. Robert J. White performed his first neurosurgery at age 15 on a frog cadaver in high school biology class. Over the next 50 years, he operated on more than 10,000 brains, one of which accounted for the most ambitious neurological experiment in history: In the '70s, he successfully transplanted the head of one monkey to the body of another. For White's efforts, the monkey awoke from the anesthesia and tried to bite his finger off.

In one of his biggest experiments he successfully isolated the brain. As I mentioned earlier, he once transplanted the head of a monkey onto the body of another. In his estimation, this process, which he referred to as a "whole body transplant," proved that the brain is truly the repository for human consciousness.

Although the transplant remained viable for only two days before the animal died, the more he did the transplants the lifespan of the monkeys became longer. The issue of the paralysis that results from the severed spinal cord, however, was impossible to avoid and remains one of the largest areas of interest in modern medicine. The animal rights movement has of course slowed down White's work, most of which was carried out decades ago when animal testing was not as controversial. The fact remains, though, that his career in neuroscience helped save countless human lives, even if he killed many dogs and monkeys along the way. Let's just hope that his work would inspire scientists to make new breakthroughs that will benefit our future.