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Reproductive quandaries pertaining to human head transplantation

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Recently, plans have been proposed to perform the first human head transplantation procedure within the next few years. However, there are significant ethical ramifications of such a procedure, particularly with regard to the ethics of sexual reproduction. First, a recipient (i.e., the head of the individual being transplanted onto a donor body) will never truly have the capacity to reproduce; rather, the donor body will reproduce upon the will of the recipient. This begs the question - would it be ethical for the recipient to use the donor's reproductive organs to have a child when the donor is legally deceased? Undoubtedly, it would be a challenge for the recipient to inform their child that the child's natural mother/father had died prior to the child's conception. Furthermore, it would be difficult for the recipient to explain to their child that the child's biological mother/father donated their body to the recipient. Second, biologic differences (e.g., sex, age, fertility and genetics) between the recipient and donor should be addressed. Would it be ethical for a fertile individual to receive an infertile body or an infertile individual to receive a fertile body? Lastly, we ought to consider where the first successful human head transplantation may lead us in the future. If same-sex head transplantation one day becomes common practice then why not to pursue opposite-sex head transplantation? Although neurochemically improbable procedure can theoretically allow an individual to transition to the opposite sex and participate in the reproductive activities associated with this sex.

Biography

Joshua A. Cuoco completed his MS at the age of 22 years from Johns Hopkins University. He is currently a second-year medical student at NYIT-COM. He studies the anatomic and functional neuronal diversity in the brain during brain development and in brain pathologies. He has published several papers in the field of neuroscience.

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