

# NEWS BREAK

**Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, June 12, 2016 of The Seattle Times e-Edition for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions. Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.**

**Article: Patient's head on new body? China doctor plans to try it (Main, A1)**

## Pre-Reading and Vocabulary

- **What is your prior knowledge about body transplants? Do you think it's a good idea? Why or why not?**

**Vocabulary: Match the words to the numbered definitions in the chart below.**

A. ambition	1. the activity of setting up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit
B. condemn	2. moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior
C. deter	3. excessively inflated or pretentious
D. entrepreneurship	4. discourage (someone) from doing something, typically by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences
E. envy	5.the condition of being transparent: "the transparency of ice" <b>synonyms:</b> translucency · limpidity · clearness · clarity · openness, accountability, straightforwardness, candor
F. ethics	6. a strong desire to do or to achieve something, typically requiring determination and hard work
G. overblown	7. a person inclined to question or doubt all accepted opinions
H. skeptics	8. designed to be useful or practical rather than attractive
I. transparency	9. express complete disapproval of, typically in public; censure
J. utilitarian	10. a feeling of discontented or resentful longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck

## Comprehension

1. Six years ago, Wang Huanming was paralyzed from the neck down after being injured wrestling with a friend. Today, he hopes he has found the answer to walking again. What does he want?
2. Wang, 62, a retired gas-company worker, is one of several people in China who have volunteered for what?
3. The idea for a body transplant is the kind of thinking that has experts around the world alarmed. Why?
4. The orthopedic surgeon proposing the operation, Dr. Ren Xiaoping of Harbin Medical University, who assisted in the first hand transplant in the United States in 1999, said he would not be deterred. What is he doing to prepare?
5. What is Dr. Ren Xiaoping's plan for this operation?
6. Critics attribute such medical experimentation in China to what?
7. How much did the Chinese government invest in this research last year?
8. Ethical issues have long dogged Chinese researchers in the field of organ transplants, where China was an international pariah for using what?
9. Some Chinese scientists and ethicists say the concerns of medical experts, especially those overseas, are overblown. What do they attribute them to?
10. What other countries are exploring the science of body transplants?
11. Some aspects of the plan are technically possible, said Dr. Abraham Shaked, a professor of surgery and director of the Penn Transplant Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. He said it could be possible to preserve the recipient's brain and the donor's body before transplant, attach many of the blood vessels and muscles, and control adverse immune reactions. What are doctors still not able to do in this type of procedure?

## Additional Activities

***Whether or not he performs the operation, leading medical experts have condemned the plan. "For most people, it's at best premature and at worst reckless," said Dr. James Bernat, a professor of neurology and medicine at the Geisel School of Medicine of Dartmouth College. Dr. Huang Jiefu, a former deputy minister of health in China, said in an interview in November that when the spine is cut, the neurons "cannot be reconnected, so it's scientifically impossible." "Ethically it's impossible," Huang added. "How can you put one person's head on another's body?"***

- Do you agree that this type of transplant is not ethical? Why or why not?

***"The Chinese system is not transparent in any way," said Arthur Caplan, a medical ethicist at New York University. "I do not trust Chinese bioethical deliberation or policy. Add healthy doses of politics, national pride and entrepreneurship, and it is tough to know what is going on." Some Chinese researchers are also concerned that the experimentation is going too far, too fast.***

- Has medical experimentation gone too far in China? Why or why not?

***The team, from Guangzhou Medical University, said, “Significant technical issues remain to be addressed.” It added that on ethical grounds, it would not advocate genome editing on viable lines “until after a rigorous and thorough evaluation and discussion are undertaken by the global research and ethics communities.”***

***“Whether it’s ethical or not, this is a person’s life. There is nothing higher than a life, and that’s the core of ethics.”***

- What are your thoughts on the above statement?

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### Answer Key to Vocabulary

- A. 6
- B. 9
- C. 4
- D. 1
- E. 10
- F. 2
- G. 3
- H. 7
- I. 5
- J. 8

### Answer Key to Comprehension Questions

1. A new body for his head.
2. A body transplant at a hospital in the northern Chinese city of Harbin.
3. At how far China is pushing the ethical and practical limits of science. Such a transplant is impossible, at least for now, according to leading doctors and experts, including some in China, who point to the difficulty of connecting nerves in the spinal cord. Failure would mean the death of the patient.
4. In an interview, Ren said he was building a team, that research was under way and that the operation would take place “when we are ready.”
5. His plan: Remove two heads from two bodies, connect the blood vessels of the body of the deceased donor and the recipient head, insert a metal plate to stabilize the new neck, bathe the spinal cord nerve endings in a glue-like substance to aid regrowth and finally sew up the skin.
6. National ambition, generous state funding, a utilitarian worldview that prioritizes results, and a lack of transparency and accountability to the outside world.
7. 1.42 trillion renminbi (\$216 billion)
8. The organs of executed prisoners. While China says it no longer uses those, Chinese transplant doctors still sometimes submit research from prisoner organs to international conferences, which is not permitted under global ethical norms.
9. They attribute them to envy at China’s remarkable scientific and economic progress in recent decades.
10. Ren is not the only one exploring the science of body transplants. Dr. Sergio Canavero, of the Turin Advanced Neuromodulation Group in Italy, is a prominent advocate, and scientists at the Institute of Theoretical and Experimental Biophysics at the Russian Academy of Sciences are also researching aspects of the procedure. Neither Canavero nor the Russian institute has plans to carry it out, though, they say.
11. It is still not possible to connect the nerves of the spinal cord, Shaked said.