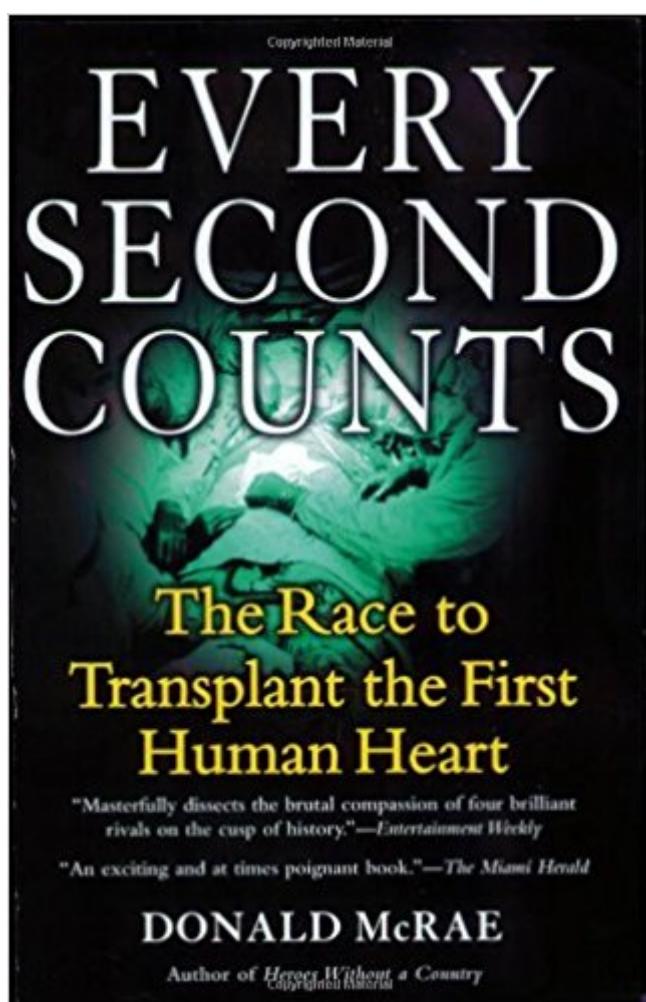


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# Every Second Counts: The Race To Transplant The First Human Heart



## **Synopsis**

Many remember the proudly beaming face of South African surgeon Christiaan Barnard after he performed the first human heart transplant. But he was not alone in his quest. In truth it was a fourway race, a fierce struggle fraught with passionate rivalry. Three other surgeons were giants in the field, and by early December 1967 all were poised to make medical history. Each had spent years perfecting his techniques; each monitored his chosen patient's condition, watching the clock, hoping a donor would be found in time. From a dank, under-equipped hospital in Cape Town to a cramped lab in San Francisco, the surgeons worked miracles, testing the limits of both science and nature. Some were friends; others were enemies. Only one would be the first.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Starred Review. Although Christiaan Barnard (who died in 2001) is venerated as the first to successfully transplant a human heart, on December 3, 1967, McRae shows that he was only one of four heart surgeons who pioneered this miraculous specialty from 1958 through 1968. The South African Barnard hadn't toiled in research labs, but, according to McRae, appropriated the work of three Americans and, in a period of debate over whether to define death by the brain's or the heart's cessation, he took a beating heart from a brain-dead donor. McRae portrays Barnard as a rural Afrikaner with an inferiority complex, a "lothario" with a deeply troubled personal life and a publicity hound who delegated postoperative patient care to others as he hobnobbed with celebrities and the media. As McRae, an award-winning London-based sports writer (*Heroes Without a Country*:

America's Betrayal of Joe Louis and Jesse Owens), demonstrates in this top-notch journalistic feat that elucidates complicated medical procedures, the Americans whom Barnard bested were medical giants. Norman Shumway in California and Richard Lower of Virginia were masters of transplant and rejection research, and New York's Adrian Kantrowitz would eventually develop the balloon pump that saved hundreds of thousands of lives. (June 1) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Through life histories, flashbacks, personal interviews, and compelling narration, McRae recounts a real-life race to the death. History books will forever spell the name of Christiaan Barnard correctly as that of the first surgeon to perform a successful human heart transplant. But for luck and timing, however, the name could as easily have been that of Norman Shumway, Adrian Kantrowitz, or Richard Lower. The world never realized at the time that three other, equally brilliant surgeons stood ready and able to take the title of first as his own. With something like 2,500 heart transplants every year in the U.S. nowadays, it is easy to take the procedure for granted, though it remains miraculous. Barnard was the arrogant pioneer who first took up its challenge and, as this gripping story of four giants converging on that accomplishment reveals, changed heart medicine forever. Much more dramatic than any fiction about its subject could be. Donna ChavezCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A medical history page turner plus a review of the intertwining of technology and ethics. I was a medical student when MCV's kidney transplant pioneer David Hume tragically flew his plane into the mountainside. And I was still in Richmond when Dick Lower was doing heart transplants. I laughed out loud reading the description of definition-of-death plaintiff attorney Doug Wilder as verbose and ambitious. He was both, all the way to the Governor's mansion. These details and the rightly deserved disdain of Barnard made this book alive on a personal, professional, and historical level. Well done.

THIS IS A GREAT BOOK AND VERY ACCURATE ABOUT THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE FIRST HUMAN HEART TRANSPLANT TOOK PLACE. THE BOOK WAS VERY WELL RESEARCHED PRIOR TO THE WRITING BY DONALD McRAE. I THINK HE WAS VERY FAIR IN HIS APPROACH TO ALL PHASES OF THE BOOK. I WAS DR.

RICHARD LOWER'S TECHNICIAN (PERFUSIONIST) FROM 1963 AT STANFORD UNTIL 1989 AT MCV IN VA. I WAS INVOLVED IN ALL HIS HEART TRANSPLANTS SO I CAN ATTEST TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF WHAT MR. MCRAE WROTE ABOUT DR.'S SHUMWAY, LOWER, AND BARNARD IN THE BOOK. I BELIEVE IT TO BE THE BEST BOOK THAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THOSE EARLY DAYS OF THE HEART TRANSPLANT BUSINESS. LANIER ALLEN, RETIRED CCP & RETIRED CHIEF OF PERfusion AT MCV HOSPITAL, RICHMOND, VA

"Every second counts" is a good story about the medical pioneers who invented heart surgery procedures and devices that are commonplace today. Most telling, is the fight that the earliest practitioners had to undergo to get the US laws that defined when death occurs changed. Until brain death rather than heart death became the law, organ donation of all kinds were hampered ... which is why a South African surgeon was able to perform the first human heart transplant. A fun and informative read.

Many of us remember the news of the first heart transplant, done, of all places, in South Africa. But only those on the inside knew that several physicians were on the brink of reaching this medical mile stone. Donald McRae describes four physicians working diligently toward the first human heart transplant. The efforts, creativity, egos and motivations of these doctors lay the background to this fascinating medical story. It reads like a medical research timeline, interwoven with facts and factoids about the major players involved. The descriptions of the doctors' various situations will surely appeal to a wide audience -- interesting to medical types as well as lay people. I was impressed by the degree of research and referencing of this book -- without giving it the flavor of an academic publication. I could not put the book down.

A fascinating description of the pioneers of open heart surgery leading to the world's first heart transplant. I was a fifth year medical student and may be biased as I was there at the time but this is the right stuff of medicine. Pioneers such as Barnard, Shumway, Lillehei live again in the tense atmosphere of stopping a heart from beating for what seems like an eternity and then restarting it again. It is accurate down to the fine minutia in the animal lab next to the morgue at the medical school of the University of Cape Town. A must read!!

This is easily the best and most comprehensive book on the efforts to perform the first successful heart transplant. It gives a good understanding of the surgeons involved, their thoughts, and efforts

to overcome the challenges presented. The author wrote in a manner that was non-judgemental about the personalities, skills, or personal failings of the principal participants. If you are interested in knowing the history of the efforts to perform heart transplants, this is the book for you.

I liked the journalistic clarity of the narrative. Also the honesty of the not-too-flattering treatment of Barnard's character. He was not a nice man it seems. None of the surgeons in the race seemed to be nice men. All bent on personal glory. It was a very revealing insight into this great surgical and medical episode.

Could not put the book down.

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