

Terri Schiavo's Death Still Being Rationalized as Brain Injured Get Help

By Bobby Schindler (Brother of Terri Schindler Schiavo)

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Recently, a group of surgeons restored the consciousness of a man who had been in a "minimally conscious state" for six years, unable to feed himself or communicate. The experiment, led by Dr. Ali Rezaei, director of the Center for Neurological Restoration at the Cleveland Clinic, involved implanting two electrodes into the brain of a trauma victim.

According to an article in the *National Catholic Register* regarding these findings, Dr. Joseph Giacino, co-leader of the study and associate director of the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute, stated that "the breakthrough raises questions about Schiavo," adding that "his patient's circumstances were different than Schiavo's."

In 1991, Terri had a similar procedure where stimulators were implanted in her brain. This has prompted several articles where doctors insisted that Terri's procedure was a failure compared to Dr. Rezaei's study, implying that Terri's brutal death was somehow justified.

Unfortunately for Terri, her experimental implants were done 16 years ago and therefore did not include the most recent technology available today. In addition, comparing the pictures of her procedure to that of the new study, one can see that the placement of the electrodes on this patient was very different from the area of the brain where the electrodes were placed in Terri's procedure, not to mention that the device (again by looking at the pictures) used on this patient was very much different than what was used on Terri.

Most importantly, however, is that the doctor involved with Terri's implantations believed that it was working and suggested that she be moved to Shands Hospital in Gainesville, Florida, which was better equipped to deliver the rehabilitation that she needed. (This is documented in court records in a statement made by Michael Schiavo in his deposition.)

Perhaps, as Dr. Rezaei said, his patient's circumstances were different from Terri's. Even so, there is now a procedure which can restore the ability of severely brain injured persons like Terri to speak and eat and some have begun to ask themselves if Terri should have been given this opportunity as well.

The truth of the matter is that Terri was a healthy woman, one who merely had a disability. She could have lived for many years if only my family was permitted to care for her. And it was my family that did everything we could to try and persuade Michael Schiavo to follow the advice of countless doctors and pursue rehabilitation for Terri but this request was never granted.

It was this reluctance to continue to pursue treatment that caused the initial rift between Schiavo and my parents. Tragically, in the years that followed, there was only a concerted effort to remove Terri's food and water, which ultimately resulted in her horrific death by dehydration and starvation.

While it is too late for Terri, there are tens of thousands of other people with brain injuries that could potentially be helped. That is why we at the Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation are working daily to protect the rights and lives of these persons.

We urge everyone to pay very close attention to the treatment of people like my sister because this is literally a life or death decision which could one day affect you or one of your

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loved ones. This is particularly important, as with each passing day there is growing promise that the brain injured can be helped through the ever-increasing volume of new treatments and technologies.

Even as medical advances are made, the basic question remains – how do we decide who deserves treatment and continued care and who does not? Where do we as a society, draw the line? The value placed on life should be based upon the inherent dignity and humanity of every person – not dependent upon changing technology.

For more information, please visit the Terri Schindler Schiavo website at www.terrisfight.org.