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James Blundell, obstetrical hemorrhage, and the origins of transfusion medicine

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Abstract

Although James Blundell is rightly acknowledged as the father of modern transfusion therapy, a review of the events surrounding the initial human-to-human transfusions in the first decades of the 19th century reveals substantial contributions by Blundell's collaborators. Blundell's uncle John Haighton provided substantial support for animal experimentation in the growing field of physiology studies. John Leacock of Barbados provided the essential original experiments that focused the path of investigation on within-species transfusions. London instrument makers such as Laundy and Lloyd provided precision-made syringes without risk of air embolism. Fellow obstetricians-- Charles Waller and Edward Doubleday-- became ardent supporters of the new therapy and brought case referrals to Blundell's attention and care. British medical journals, such as *The Lancet*, provided much needed dissemination of early successes to curious medical practitioners. This 200th anniversary year of the first successful attempts at human-to-human transfusion presents an opportunity to review the failures and successes which occurred during the first days of what would ultimately become a life-saving treatment for millions worldwide.

Keywords: Blundell, History of transfusion, obstetrical hemorrhage.

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