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Abstract

The concept of brain death was formulated in 1968 in the landmark report *A Definition of Irreversible Coma*. While brain death has been widely accepted as a determination of death throughout the world, many of the controversies that surround it have not been settled. Some may be rooted in a misconception about the history of brain death. The concept evolved as a result of the convergence of several parallel developments in the second half of the 20th century including advances in resuscitation and critical care, research into the underlying physiology of consciousness, and growing concerns about technology, medical futility, and the ethics of end of life care. Organ transplantation also developed in parallel, and though it clearly benefited from a

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