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## Ethical Issues in Limb Transplants

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In April 1999, the *Lancet* published an Early Report on the six months' results of the first human hand allograft performed in Lyon in September 1998.<sup>1</sup> The same clinical team performed a double human hand allograft in January 2000. In the interim, a U.S. team at Louisville performed a similar procedure. Yet permission to perform further human hand allografts has again been refused by the St. Mary's Hospital Trust Clinical Ethics Committee, on which one of the authors sits (DD). Following face-to-face evaluation of hand function in the transplant recipient six months after the operation, the committee reiterated its concerns that the level of function attained did not outweigh the risk. Doubts about "the ethics of putting a patient through toxic immunosuppressive therapy for a non-vital operation" were also raised in a commentary on the *Lancet* report.<sup>2</sup> The recipient of the first hand transplant has recently announced that he is actually seeking to have it amputated, saying, "I've become mentally detached from it."<sup>3</sup> This article explores the ethical arguments both for and against limb transplant, and particularly human hand allograft, with emphasis on the issues concerning identity which can be seen in the recipient's reaction.

On one view, hand transplants cross technological frontiers but not ethical ones. They raise no ethical questions that have not been answered long since, in favour of transplantation. There can be no objections except from unregenerate opponents of progress in science—according to one of the very few

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