

A Review of

## ***Transplant***

***From Myth to Reality***

Author: Nicholas L. Tilney, M.D.

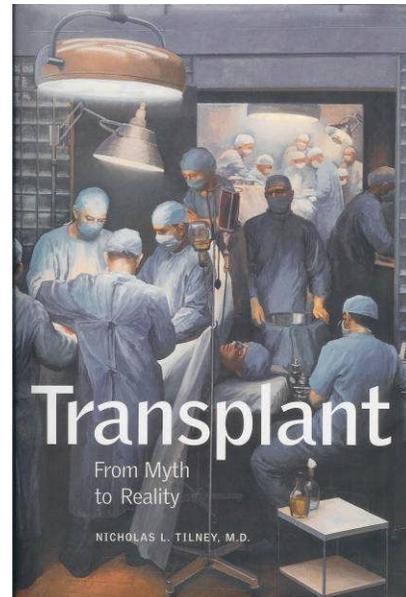
Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

As a reader and student of everything transplant, an interest sparked by my own life saving heart transplant back in 1994, this book was one of the most fascinating I have encountered. Truly a scholarly history of the evolution of transplantation as we know it today, Dr. Tilney's insightful and often first-hand accounts of medical detail and trivia was both a difficult and enjoyable read.

The author traces not only the history of transplantation in general, but also each type of transplant is given its own chapter where we are treated with the roots of that process from ancient times through the evolution of modern transplantation to where it is today and in some cases what can be expected in the future, a fascinating journey that mentions every significant pioneer of this medical science in telling the stories of their roles. Colorful human elements are included in the stories, not only of the explorers themselves, but also the patients who are often famous in their own contributions to the progress that got us to where we are today. Such contributions were often gained at loss of patient lives as surgeries and procedures were experimental in the early days. But through such desperate dedication in trying to overcome critical medical conditions, progress, slow and elusive, finally passed the point where others would live based on what was learned from such sacrifices.

I would recommend this reading to patients after their surgeries, not before. There is so much pain, suffering and loss of life in the telling of such history that those still waiting for their own transplant might lose the perspective that this is history; that such losses led to the highly successful procedures that evolved into what we enjoy today with our transplants leading to "normal" lives for decades beyond that near death point so many experience. For those looking back from their successful transplant, this reading will serve as a reminder of the progress and sacrifices that led to our own success, leading to an even deeper appreciation of our experience (if that is possible given what most already feel post transplant...). Even more insightful is the realization that years from now, today's miracle procedures and advances described in this book as state of the art will probably seem as barbaric and bizarre as the historical ones we read about in this encyclopedic recounting.

As one who is highly involved in many activities transplant and organ donation related, it was fascinating to read details about patients and doctors I have been fortunate to meet over the years since involuntary indoctrination to this subject matter with my own transplant. As one such example, at the 2004 US Transplant Games, for the thousands attending, we got to meet the surgeon and his first successful kidney transplant patient, both still alive 50 years later! The inspiration that gave everyone there was amazing, especially as we realize how much progress has been made since that historic moment that is recounted in detail and with humor in this book's stories that should result in even



better outcomes for today's patients.

If you choose to read this book, let me suggest you don't give up when the medical details are "over your head," rather skim through such passages and slow back down when the details return to a level appropriate to your own understanding. Whatever level you seek in this reading, content is there to fulfill your need, whether you are a true medical student, practicing medical professional, historian or thankful patient. When you get to the end, and there is an excellent Notes and Index after that closing chapter, stop and say a quiet prayer for all those pioneering researchers, doctors and patients who helped make transplantation the success it is for us who are alive today because of it. It's been, and continues to be, quite a promising and exciting journey.

Note: **Transplant** can be purchased on-line at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

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**Brief bio:**

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is now a volunteer with NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.