

PAM REYNOLDS ONE OF THE THE MOST IMPORTANT NEAR EXPERIENCES ON RECORD.

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Ever since Dr Raymond Moody published his now famous book *Life After Life* in 1973 the public has been aware of the Near-Death Experience (NDE). And ever since that time the debate has raged over whether accounts of NDEs provide a glimpse into the afterlife or are merely hallucinations of a dying brain. However, in 1991 a NDE case occurred that is widely considered the most important case ever. It provides the strongest evidence to date refuting the theory that NDEs are hallucinations, supports the theory that mind and brain are different and indicates that consciousness may indeed survive death. That case occurred to Pam Reynolds.

NDES IN THE BLIND

For a number of different documentaries on the evidence for life after death I have made or participated in (*Surviving Death*, Netflix) I have interviewed some of the world's leading experts and experiencers in the NDE field. Some of the most striking evidence has come from research conducted by Dr Kenneth Ring and Dr Sharon Cooper who looked at NDEs in the blind.

I interviewed one of their subjects, Vicki Noratuk. Blind from birth she was involved in a near fatal car accident during which she had an NDE, floated out of her body and was then able to 'see' for the first time, accurately describing her environment. Yet Vicki's optic never had been destroyed at birth. Not even her dreams were visual.

Yet despite this robust evidence sceptics still insist that NDEs are a product of trauma to the brain and no more than an elaborate hallucination. Evidence that NDEs are some type of hallucination comes mainly from incidents where cardiac arrest has occurred. In such cases the brain is starved of oxygen causing a condition called Anoxia. In this state the brain begins to malfunction and hallucinations are common.

THE THEORY OF ANOXIA

There are several major problems with the Anoxia theory especially if it is to be used to explain all so-called veridical NDEs. This occurs when a person is able to obtain accurate information about their environment when they were unconscious or pronounced clinically dead. Later their observations can be verified by comparing them to what witnesses present during the resuscitation actually saw. If these were hallucinations, how is it possible that these supposed out of body perceptions were accurate?

Sceptics often point to the fact that many NDE cases are largely anecdotal. That there is insufficient scientific data about the state of the brain during the event to be certain what is happening. In the Pam Reynolds case the sceptics concerns are completely turned on their head.

For in this case more scientific data was recorded at the time of the event than during any NDE before or since. And that data appears to contradict the theory that NDEs are merely hallucinations of the dying brain.

PAM REYNOLDS

Pam Reynolds is a successful musician and composer living in Atlanta, USA. For years she suffered terrible headaches and dizziness. After having a CAT scan doctors discovered she had a giant aneurysm located at the base of her brain. An aneurysm is weakness in a blood vessel wall that balloons out. If the balloon bursts the results can be fatal. In Pam's case the doctors told her she had no chance of surviving since the aneurysm was inaccessible and no surgical procedure could remove it.

Fortunately for Pam her mother located Dr Robert Spetzler. One of the world's leading neurosurgeons and Director of the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. Spetzler had pioneered a daring surgical procedure called hypothermic cardiac arrest. In this procedure surgeons could firstly deflate the aneurism and then remove it without fear of damaging the brain. However, the operation nicknamed 'standstill' was radical and involved lowering her body temperature to 60 degrees Fahrenheit, stopping her heart and breathing, draining the blood from the brain and flattening her brain waves. In everyday terms Pam would be clinically dead for an hour before being revived.

Dr Spetzler explains that the reason no brain damage occurs even though the flow of blood to the brain has stopped is due to the fact that the brain is kept so cold. " It's similar to what happens in animals when they hibernate," he states. " These animals essentially lower their body temperature and so shut down their metabolic engines. Once you have cooled the body down to a certain point you can drain the blood out and for sixty minutes the brain can be without oxygen but remain undamaged."

STANDSTILL

The operation began a the morning when a team of doctors prepared Pam for the complex and risky operation. All manner of sensors were attached to Pam's body to monitor her vital signs. Most importantly electrodes were attached to her scalp and an EEG machine recorded activity in the brain's cerebral cortex. Additionally tiny speakers were placed in her ears. These produced a series of clicks that activated the auditory nerves in her brain stem. These devices enabled the doctors throughout the operation to both monitor activity in her brain stem and activity in the cortex. A fact that later would prove crucial to NDE researchers.

During the operation Dr. Spetzler opened Pam's skull using a highly specialized piece of medical equipment know as a Midas Rex bone saw. This is a pneumatically driven saw that easily and precisely cuts through bone. As Dr. Spetzler was using this tool to cut out a large section of Pam's skull her NDE began. Pam later recalled that the first thing she became aware of was the high-pitched whine the saw made when operating.

" My eyes were taped shut, I had these speakers in my ear and I was nearly comatose," she states. " And yet I began to hear this unpleasant noise. I sort of popped out of my body to see what this horrific noise was. My vantage point was rather like sitting on top of Dr Spetzler's shoulder. I could see the instrument that was making the awful noise. It looked like an electric toothbrush. There was a case very close by that had attachments for it. It looked a lot like the sort of case my father used to keep his socket wrenches in when I was a kid."

EXITING THE BODY

Pam describes the feeling of exiting her body as similar to instantly losing 500 pounds in weight. "It was wonderful. I could move around at will," she recalls. "My thought process took me where I wanted to go. There was no more pain, no more suffering, no more fear."

As Pam hovered over her body she noticed a number of important details that were later confirmed by the medical team. She noticed that her head had only been partially shaved. Then she observed one of the cardiac surgeons locating her femoral artery and vein in her right groin. She heard the surgeon stating that the vessels were too small for the cardiopulmonary bypass machine and that they would have to open vessels on her left leg.

As the operation progressed her body temperature continued to drop and her heart began to flutter and die. Complete cardiac arrest occurred when the heart was injected with potassium chloride. At this point the head of the operating table was tipped up, the heart lung machine switched off and all the blood drained from her body. By now all electrical activity in the brain had ceased. Both monitors registered a flat line. She was by all the usual medical criteria clinically dead. It was at this point that Pam's NDE went to the next stage.

" There was a sensation like being pulled, but not against your will I was going on my own accord because I wanted to go. The feeling was like going up in an elevator real fast." Next Pam recognized the voice of her deceased grandmother. " I heard her voice calling me. But it wasn't a voice made from vocal cords. She would just look at me and I would understand." She continues. "As I began to discern the individuals, they were wearing light, they seemed to be made of light. For the ones I recognized it felt as if there had never been any separation between us. There was love, warmth and protection. I felt acutely that I had been brought to this place to be protected, so that my body could be prepared. And it felt wonderful."

Next Pam described a group of deceased relatives who surrounded her and fed her. "They were not doing this through my mouth with food, but they were nourishing me with something. The only way I can describe it was something sparkly."

Then Pam noticed her uncle who had died when he was 39 and " a sea of other people" many of whom she didn't recognize but to whom she felt deeply connected and who on hindsight she believes were her ancestors.

COMMUNICATING

Pam was stuck by the completely different way she and others around her communicated. " The quality of communication is much better than what we have here. You don't have to search to find exactly the right words to express your thoughts. During that experience communication moves at the speed of light. Just think and it is sent out instantaneously. There is no misunderstanding. What gets said is the truth."

Like many other people who have NDEs Pam was amazed at the beauty of the environment she found herself in: an environment of light and love. "I asked my grandmother if the light all around me was the light of God? This question provoked great laughter by everyone around me. My grandmother replied – no, sweetheart, the light is not God. The light is what happens when God breathes."

Pam was also amazed at the difference in the colors she saw which she described as far more beautiful and intense than any seen in her normal experience. Being a musician she was also fascinated by her observation that each of the individual entities she saw was emitting a musical tone that combined together to produce a beautiful harmony.

She then began to explore her own non-physical state and realized that she had retained her normal appearance. " I held my hands up to my face, I saw them so I knew I was there, I could feel me. The odd thing was I didn't feel so very different from the way I feel here. And, yet, [sighs] how do I explain this, when there are no words. There was no density in the flesh. They just weren't dense, but I held them up to my face to secure the knowledge that I was there." In further describing the non-physical environment she found herself in she said: " It was as if the bodies were floating in mid-air, there was light and shadow, but it didn't seem to fall on anything. And, that's what convinces me that I probably was not in heaven. I probably was in an in between place to be kept and cared for."

The operation was now nearly over. Dr. Spetzler had clipped the aneurysm and closed her skull. However dangerous problems now arose. The silent heart monitor began to register the activity of ventricular fibrillation. A lethal cardiac rhythm that if not corrected would kill her. Since the aneurysm had been removed the surgeons decided to use a defibrillator to jump-start Pam's heart. Initially the paddles were applied and electricity shocked into her heart. No response. At this point in Pam's NDE her deceased uncle began to lead her back through a tunnel so she could once again see her lifeless body on the operating table. " When I saw my body I didn't want to go back. It looked awful, like a train wreck. I looked like it was, dead. It scared me and I didn't want to look at it."

RETURNING TO THE BODY

Pam then protested to her uncle that she didn't want to leave. He then told her that she couldn't stay, and that her children who were still quite young would need her. She insisted that the kids would do just fine without her. " He then told me that returning to the body is like jumping in a

swimming pool, so just jump. And my response to him was no way! So, he pushed me. And I hit the body at the moment my heart was defibrillated a second time. At that exact time they achieved sinus rhythm and there I was alive and somewhat uncomfortable." For a long time Pam was furious with her uncle for pushing her back into her body. "It's taken me a long time to forgive him for that. He was my most favourite person on the planet and then to do something like that. Well, I felt it was cruel and unusual."

Pam described re-entering her body like " Jumping into a pool of ice cold water. It really hurt." After the second defibrillation had succeeded in reactivating her heart, Pam regained consciousness on the operating table. As the surgeons disconnected her from the various machines Pam noticed that they were playing rock music. " When I came to I heard 'Hotel California' by the Eagles. One of the lines was – ' You can check out anytime you like but you can never leave'. I mentioned this later to one of the surgeons and complained at how incredible insensitive this was. He just laughed and said you need to sleep."

EVIDENCE OF LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Pam's NDE case is remarkable for a number of important reasons. Firstly, the observations she made about what the doctors were doing during the operation are completely accurate and were later confirmed by the surgical team. Dr Spetzler has stated that her description of the bone saw and accessory box is entirely appropriate. " I might describe the saw as an electric toothbrush myself", he says.

And secondly throughout the operation Pam's brain functions were closely monitored. During the period of the operation when her heart was stopped and blood was drained from her body all electrical activity in the brain had ceased. The readings from her cortex and brain stem were completely dead. And yet during this period she is able to accurately describe the environment in the operating room. Sceptics claim that Pam's NDE was the result of a hallucination but Dr Spetzler knows this cannot be correct. " Hallucination is not the explanation," he states. "Because hallucination requires metabolic activity. Hallucination is a brain function. It may not function normally, it may give you aberrations that you normally wouldn't have, but it's still very much of a function of an active brain."

When asked how it was possible for Pam to accurately describe her environment whilst in a state of clinical death Dr Spetzler has no answer. " I don't have an explanation. I believe that Pam recalled things that were remarkably accurate. I do not understand from a physiological perspective how that could possibly have happened. So, I would say it's one of those things that I can't explain. I hope not to be arrogant enough to say it can't happen, but from a scientific perspective, there is no acceptable explanation to me."

As a scientist Dr Spetzler is cautious in his interpretation of the data in Pam's case. Yet he is clear that in this instance the usual sceptical argument that the NDE was a hallucination is completely wrong. And if this is so then what are the alternatives? For many researchers the only explanation is that mind and brain are different. That in some extraordinary way consciousness

can exist independently of the physical body and brain. And that because of this consciousness can continue after death.

The Pam Reynolds NDE case offers us the best evidence to date that NDEs may indeed be a vivid glimpse into the afterlife.