Health Policy Paper

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Henrietta Lacks case is one of the most intriguing cases in terms of the United States medical history. Henrietta Lacks was an American woman whose cells were being used for the creation of the first immortalized HeLa cell line (Skloot, 2013). It is considered to be one of the most important cell lines in the history of the medical research. It was in January 29th, 1951 when she went to the John Hopkins hospital, which was one of the few medical centres in her area as she was feeling a knot in her womb (Skloot, 2000). It was assumed that she was pregnant at that point of time. She was being treated with tube inserts and was advised to return for X-Ray Treatment. During the course of her treatment, couple of her cells were taken from her without her permission. Those samples were then given to Otto Gey for the purpose of cancer research. The major premise of the case was that how the whole activity was carried out without asking for her consent. The case brought into fore the medical practices and how cell donation and other legislations are supposed to be working out (Masters, 2002).

# Scientific Background behind the Case

Otto Gey was one of the first researchers who studied the effect of the Lack’s cancer cells at that point of time. One of the key observations that was being made by him was that how the cells at that point of time were reproducing at a very rapid rate. What it meant that these cells could be kept alive to ensure that much more extensive examination can be carried out. Until then, most of the cells that were obtained for the purpose of the research did not used to survive for a very long period of time. It was problematic to make sure that the variety of tests could be carried out on the tests sample at that point of time (Masters, 2002).

# Further Research on Cells

The ability of the cells to reproduce has many implications in terms of the scientific research. There were many achievements that were being made in terms of the scientific research at that point of time. For instance, the cells were being used to develop some sort of polio vaccination (Lucey, 2009). To make sure that the reaction of the medication on the cells could be looked at, there was mass production of the cells that was carried to determine the effect of these cells. The cells were also important in the case that how they allowed much more advanced studies in terms of the way treatment of the cancer is supposed to be carried out (Jones, 1997). The HeLa cells were correspondingly injected into the cancer patients as well as the prison inmates. The same was being done on the healthy individuals to make sure that it can be determined that how the transmission of the cancer as a disease can be controlled in an appropriate manner (Hsu, 1976).

# Mass Production of the HeLa Cells

The demand for the cells was so high that the mass production of the cells was being carried out. The sample were being mailed to the scientists across the world so that it can be made sure that some sort of research could be carried out in terms of the treatment of Cancer and AIDS (Callaway, 2013). The effects of the radiation and other such effects were also evaluated onto the cells and the senility of the cells to the tape, glue and some of the other materials was also being looked at. The massive demand for the cells can be estimated by the fact that as of now, about 50 million metric tons of the cells are being capitulated.

# New Policies of Consent and Giving Permission

One of the reasons that the case gained considerable spotlight is due to the fact that neither the family of Henrietta Lacks nor herself were contacted or any sort of consent was being asked when it comes to using her cells extensively for the treatment. The cells were being used for the purpose of the medical research as well as commercial entity and the family’s consent was missing during the course of the whole time period. When the knowledge about the extensive usage of the cells became public, there was objections being raised by the family of Henrietta Lacks. One of the concerns of the grandchildren was that how the underlying privacy issues about the grandchildren and the great grandchildren of Henrietta Lacks are going to be worked out. It was due to the fact that how the cells sequencing could be used to reach towards an interference (Adey, 2013).

# Agreement between Henrietta Lacks’ Family and NIH

It was in August 2013 that the agreement was being reached between the families of both parties that how some control over the access of the DNA sequence was supposed to be found and what are some of the thing that could be done to make sure that the future provisions in such cases could be created (Adey, 2013).

# Difference Between Past and Present Treatment

In the past, there was no such provision and the legal regulations were not in place when someone’s cell was going to be used. These days, things are different in the sense that the consent from the family, some sort of royalty and the involvement of the family members in the usage is quite common (Adey, 2013).

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