

World's first face, hands transplant patient dies

June 15 2009

A Frenchman who underwent the world's first face and double-hand transplant in April after being disfigured in an accident has died, hospital officials said Monday.

The man, in his thirties, died of cardiac arrest while undergoing a follow-up operation on June 8, according to Laurent Lantieri, the surgeon who performed the groundbreaking transplant near Paris.

"He developed a facial infection a few weeks after his operation, and during an operation to try to tackle the infection he suffered cardiac arrest," Lantieri told RTL radio.

Lantieri said the patient's death was linked to a heart problem, not to the transplant itself.

"Developing an infection is a common phenomenon among transplant patients," he said. "All the biopsies we performed showed there was absolutely no rejection. Neither was it a vascular problem."

"We have no explanation for the cardiac arrest," Lantieri said, adding that he was awaiting results of a post-mortem examination.

Surgeons had replaced the patient's entire face above the lips, including the scalp, nose, ears and forehead, in a 30-hour operation involving a medical team of more than 40.

The recipient, on a donor waiting list for more than a year, had scars from burns to the face and hands so severe that it had robbed him of all social life.

Worldwide, there have been five other face transplants to date, three of them in France, but it was the first time a transplant of both hands and the face had been completed in one go.

The first successful [face transplant](#) was performed in France in 2005 on Isabelle Dinoire, a 38-year-old woman who had been mauled by her dog.

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