Walter Freeman

Niva Leu
Background

- Born November 18, 1895, died May 31, 1972
- Married, with 6 children
- Neurologist
- Father was a doctor, grandfather was a surgeon
- Attended Yale and Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Traveled Europe studying neurology and psychiatry.
- Most known for his work with the lobotomy
- Described as a gentle, kind, convincing man
- There was not a lot that stopped him in his efforts of creating the lobotomy
What Happens In a Lobotomy

- Destruction of the connections in the prefrontal lobe
- Standard Lobotomy, Moniz
- Transorbital Lobotomy, Freeman
Phineas Gage

- Mild tempered
- Foreman during construction of Americas railroads in 1848
- Explosive was accidentally detonated
- 3 Foot long rod through head
- Cognitive abilities and memory remained intact but had a personality change
What Happened to Gage..

- Orbitofrontal cortex part of Gages brain was destroyed
- Lost an eye
- Part of the brain is attributed to emotion
- Questions arose if removing this part of brain would help benefit people with overly strong emotion, like depression and anxiety
1935: Becky the Chimp

- Jacobsen, Wolfe, and Jackson tested these questions
- Removed frontal lobe
- Put Becky under stress tests
- No longer observed stress when tested
Later in 1935: Antonio Moniz

- Lecture was given on results of removal of frontal lobes in animals
- Moniz, a neuropsychiatrist, suggested this be tested on humans
- Later this year, Moniz did this procedure
- Published results and got attention of Walter Freeman
- Shot by his patient
Saint Elizabeths Mental Hospital

- Mentally ill and World War 1 Veterans were housed here and rarely cured
- Treated with:
  - Electroshock
  - High-pressure water sprays
  - Insulin injections
- Freeman sought an effective treatment
- Examined brains that from patients suffering from mental illness and brains that were not, couldn’t find a physical difference
- He began to consider Moniz's work
James Watts

- 1904 - 1994
- Neurosurgeon
- Watts was recruited by Freeman for assistance in lobotomies
- Would conduct the lobotomy while Freeman sat behind him instructing him what to do
- Accounted that 1/3 of procedures were a success
First Patient

- 63 year old Alice Hammett
- Suffered from depression, anxiety and insomnia
- Within hours had a placid expression
- In the evening was alert and had no anxiety or apprehension
- Considered a success
Aftermath of a Lobotomy

- Patients would receive black eyes from the procedure.
- Expressions would become more carefree / aloof / child-like.
Continuing Lobotomy Procedures

- 6 more operations were done with good results
- Several months later, patients began to relapse
- By the time Freeman had gotten to his 12th patient, he ruled lobotomy a success
- Patients were no longer hostile, but did not lead normal lives
Medical Conference

- Freeman reported his results as a success at a medical conference in Baltimore
- Reported it as a last resort
- Unethical to bash another physician, but crowd was shocked at what he had done
- Appealed to public
- "Surgery of the soul"
Rose Mary Kennedy

- Developmentally delayed early on
- Worried about sexual behaviors
- Lobotomy at 23, within the first 100 of first done
- 80% of lobotomies were on women
- Failed, spend the rest of her life institutionalized
Changing the Procedure.. Transorbital Lobotomy

- Standard lobotomy was not sufficient, was expensive and time consuming
- Created a new take on this procedure.. Transorbital lobotomy
- This procedure took 3-4 minutes
- Freeman performed in 1946 behind Watts back
- Watts thought lobotomy should be treated as a major surgery
- Day after Watts observed Freeman doing this, they no longer shared an office
Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RfJv4zGpkw
Gaining Acceptance

- Press and public fully on his side
- Accepted by medical community
Teaching Others

- "Mass produce" this procedure
- Anyone could learn in an afternoon
- Bragged about fellow professionals couldn’t stomach the procedure
Early 1950s

- The beginning of the end
- Claims of boredom with procedure
- Perform with non dominant hand
- Lost a patient while trying to take a picture
- Procedure turned into a first treatment option
"Chemical Lobotomy"

- 1954, Thorazine hit the market
- Was marketed as a chemical lobotomy
- All the same results without the side effects
- This was when the medical community turned its back on lobotomies
Reinventing Lobotomy

- Desperate attempts
- Housewives who couldn’t handle new lifestyle
- Children with ADHD
Howard Dully

- Underwent lobotomy at age 12
- Step mother sought it out help of doctor freeman, without dully being there

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW_dNktNFRA
Last Procedure

- Patient died from hemorrhage
- Stripped of all medical authority
- Blind to consequences of failures and faults
Discussion Questions....

- #1: Do you think freeman had good intent behind producing these procedures or do you believe he wanted to just make a name for himself? Do you believe he got caught up in it?
#2: If your loved one suffered from a mental illness, do you think at the time you would have subjected them to undergo a lobotomy?
#3: What radical medical procedures do you believe we are doing today that will be viewed as the lobotomy of our time?