

With this year's theme, *Debate and Diplomacy in History*, we wanted to find a topic that encompassed both variables. Looking at various topics and figures in history, Henrietta Lacks stuck out the most for a variety of reasons. Following Henrietta Lack's death in 1951, her cells were taken *without* the consent of the family and used in scientific studies. These studies were groundbreaking, finding that her cells doubled every 20 to 24 hours – never dying. Lacks' HeLa cells created an ethical debate between researchers and her family which has led to advancements in medical diplomacy.

Our research and analysis began with internet research from Johns Hopkins Hospital about the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks. Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, along with the 2017 HBO film, provided great insight into her story while giving her family a voice. Books, graphs, videos, newspaper clippings, and medical journals aided in our understanding of how much of an impact Lack's HeLa cells had on modern medicine. The documentary, *The Way of All Flesh*, provided primary insight into the effect that the discovery of HeLa had on the world as well as Lacks' family. Government documents communicated the medical diplomacy that was brought about after decades of ethical debate.

We felt that a website format would best portray our topic with the resources that we had. The website category, with a limited amount of words, allowed us to use images and other forms of resources to illustrate Lacks' story and lasting impact.

Henrietta Lacks' HeLa Cells were used without Henrietta Lacks' consent, which was an unethical, but accepted, medical practice in 1951. The immortality of the HeLa Cells proved to be the catalyst for years of advanced medical discoveries. Lack's cells discovered new cures, vaccines, and paved the way for advancements in modern medicine. Debates over medical research ethics concerning consent have led to diplomacy in the form of legislation and oversight

including the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which protects patient rights, informed consent, and increased communication among the medical community, donors, and research participants. Through continuous debate and subsequent diplomacy now with the input of the Lacks family, the use of HeLa Cells continues to facilitate important medical research and discovery.

Henrietta Lacks death and subsequent use of her cells (HeLa Cells) was an unethical medical practice that dramatically advanced medicine. Among many medical breakthroughs, HeLa Cells are credited for their help in developing a vaccine for polio, saving thousands of children from paralysis and death. These cells continues to facilitate important medical research today including studies of COVID-19. In addition, the debate of the ethical practice of using human tissue helped to increase patient protection rules and regulations.