

Monday's Daily Herald Oct. 15, 2012

Doctor's tale adds credibility to out-of-body experiences

Every once in a while, I come across an article that I consider to be groundbreaking. In the recent issue of Newsweek, a neurosurgeon who was in a coma for several days claims to have had an out-of-body experience. While in his coma, he experienced a much greater reality than our current understanding of our physical state. This is notable because that part of the brain involved in dreaming was actually not functioning during his coma.

Although medicine prides itself on having its foundation in hard science, there have been many well-documented reports of patients having out-of-body experiences during surgery and near death. Most of these reports are dismissed as fantasy, but there are some documented experiences that are so detailed as to defy explanation. In the case of this neurosurgeon, here is someone who is trained in the hard sciences experiencing something that is, at this point in time, untestable by the traditional scientific method.

I remember several years ago watching a TV program about out-of-body experiences by people who had near-death events. All of their descriptions were similar despite the fact that they were all very



Patrick B. Massey, M.D.
Alternative approach

different individuals. A number of them, initially, did not believe in life after death. Several of the scientists on this TV program felt that these were not out-of-body experiences but that it was simply the brain dying. These experiences were the result of progressive brain death. However, their explanations were, in actuality, simply theories — no more scientifically valid than the reports of the people having a near-death event.

The Newsweek article is important because it was the story of a neurosurgeon's experiences. His credentials add credibility to the concept that there is more beyond this physical plane than we can easily measure. This experience blends quite well with the whole concept of energy-based healing. Energy-based healing is like tasting chocolate for the first time. You can't really describe it, but once you experience it you know it to be true. An out-of-body, near-death experience is difficult to

describe or to understand, but once you experience it, you know it to be true.

In my discussions with physicians about spirituality, I have discovered that many physicians (and probably nurses and other health care providers) have had profound spiritual experiences in their medical practices. I have met surgeons who have felt electrical-like energy in their patients while doing abdominal surgery. I have met physicians who, soon after their patient died, could actually see a misty like form leaving the patient. Some physicians can actually "see" inside their patients or can "feel" where a diseased organ or injury exists in their patients.

There are some who would say that out-of-body experiences cannot be proven and that people are simply relating some biochemical reaction going on within the body. I would argue that just because we don't have the scientific tools to examine a phenomenon does not mean that the phenomenon is not real.

• **Patrick B. Massey, M.D., Ph.D** is medical director for complementary and alternative medicine for the Alexian Brothers Health System. His website is www.alt-med.org.