




man with artificial heart



A poem by aleksandra mir
after a ny times article by lawrence k. altman
saturday, december 1, 2001



man with artificial heart
dies 5 months after implant

device beat flawlessly in pioneering patient
by lawrence k.altman

robert tools
the first recipient
of a self contained
artificial heart
died yesterday
at jewish hospital in louisville, ky.
where he had
received
the device
nearly five
months
before

mr. tools
who was 59
had remained in the hospital
since his surgery
on july 2

he died
from complications
following bleeding
in his abdomen, which began
early thursday
his kidneys
and liver
failed
and his blood pressure
dropped
leading
to

his death
in the early afternoon

dr. roberts d. dowling
one of his doctors

said

in a brief interview

the hospital

said

that mr. tool's death
was not due to
malfunction
of

the AbioCor artificial heart

that dr. dowling implanted with his partner
dr. laman a. gray jr.

in mr. tools's final hours

doctors
could not
maintain
his blood pressure

even with strong drugs
mr. tools suffered
a severe stroke
on nov. 11 and

his
remaining
brain function

ceased

shortly after noon

yesterday

with the agreement of mr. tools's wife

carol

and a retired
anesthesiologist
who had been appointed
as an advocate for mr. tools, dr. dowling
instructed engineers to override
safety commands

in
a computer
to
stop

the AbioCor mechanical heart

until then
the device had beat flawlessly
more
than
20
million
times

inside
mr. tools

before receiving the implant
mr. tools was nearly bedridden
from end-stage heart failure
he had lost more than
50 pounds

mostly muscle

and had difficulty
even raising his head
heart attacks
had left such extensive scarring
that the two main pumping chambers of
his heart
were failing badly
and his lungs
were full
of fluid

a formula used to predict survival
in heart failure patients
showed that

statistically, mr. tools

had an 80 percent
chance of dying
within 30 days

r. tools
became the first

AbioCor recipient

after another medical
center had rejected
him as a candidate
for a heart
transplant
because
he had
significant

kidney failure

diabetes

and
other
medical
problems

in august

mr. tools said

he knew
instantly
after awakening
from the implant surgery
that he was getting better

the device
and other equipment
in his chest
wighted more than
four
pounds
and made a constant
whirring sound
but

as long
as I can hear
the sound
I know
that
I am here

mr. tools said

adding
that he preferred it
to the alternative

death

mr. tools
who was black
sought
in the interview
to dispel
rumors
that he had been

used
as
a
guinea
pig

he said

he volunteered
for the experiment

because
I knew
I had one more
chance
to survive

but mr. tools also

said

I
realize

that

death

is

inevitable

by late september

mr. tools had recovered
sufficient strength to be-
gin making trips
from the hospital to

ice cream parlors

a comedy club

and a park

earlier this month

mr. dowling told
a meeting
of the american
heart association
that the
hospital

was working
with the food and drug
administration on plans
to discharge
mr. tools from the
hospital

the doctors
had expressed
hope that mr. tools might be
able to go to his home
in franklin, ky

by christmas

four other patients
are living
with

AbioCor hearts

which are made

by Abiomed Inc.

of danvers, mass.
public information
about their recoveries
though limited
has indicated
that they
have
had

mixed
success

one recipient

tom christerson 70
who
received his implant
on sept.13
at jewish hospital
remains
on a ventilator
in recent weeks
he devel-
oped a fever
to 170 degrees
fahrenheit
but recovered no infection
was found and the cause of
the fever was not determined

dr. gray said

the three others

who had not been identified

are at the texas
heart institute and st. lukes epis-
copal hospital in houston; the uni-
versity of california at los angeles
medical center; and hahnemann
university hospital in philadelphia

on monday

Abiomed said

that the f.d.a. had reviewed
the progress
of the first
five patients

and had given
the company
permission to
implant the
device in
another
five patients

the next day

the sixth AbioCor implant

was performed in an uniden-
tified man
at the texas heart insti-
tute

but

the man
did not survive
surgery
because
he
developed
uncontrolled

bleeding

the condition
was related to
the man's longstanding
heart
failure and
to earlier
heart surgery that re-
quired
anticoagulat therapy
his surgeon
dr. o.h. frazier

said

in mr. tool's case
from the out-
set, dr. gray
had warned
that unex-
pected
complications
could happen
at any timethey didseveraltimes

a few hours
after the operation
mr. tools
was taken back
to the operating room

to stop
bleeding
in his chest

which doctors
attributed
to one
or two
loose
stitches

mr. tools
went on to suffer
anum-
ber of episodes
of bleeding
from his
nose and stomach
and required
many blood transfusions
the cause
was not determined
but because
of the bleeding
the doctors
could
not
prescribe adequate amounts of anti-
coagulant drugs to
prevent forma-
tion
of
blood
clots in the device
pieces of such
clot can break off
and be carried
by the blood to lodge
in the brain
and cause
a stroke

dr. gray, who was away

at a scientific meeting
when mr. tools died
said earlier
this week
that his team
could
not
give
mr. tools
adequate doses
of anticoagulants
about 80 per-
cent of the time
during
the first
two months
after
the implant

thereafter

they tried to juggle
the amounts of anticoagulants
but

the bleeding
problem
persisted

on Thursday

while mr. tools was
taking an anticoagulant

he bled
spontaneously

into the area
behind the lining
of the stomach
and intes-
tines

dr. dowling said
the second major setback
mr. tools experi-
enced
in the last
three weeks

on nov. 11

mr. tools suffered
a major stroke
that paralyzed
the right side of
his body
and impaired
his speech
the stroke was due
to a blood clot that may
have come from

the AbioCor heart

the AbioCor was removed
in an autopsy yesterday
and a detailed
examination
may pro-
vide clues to the origins
of the stroke

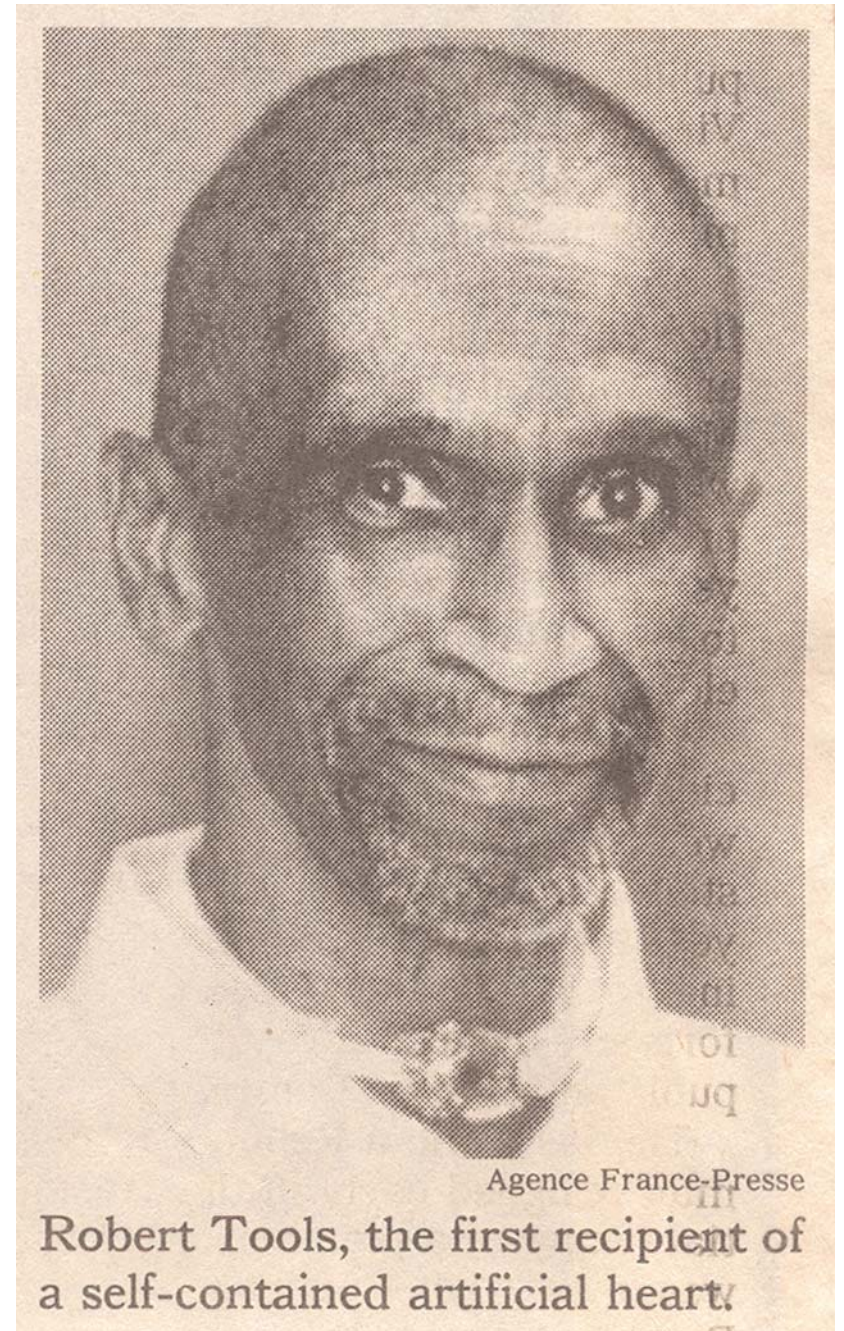
mr. tools was born

in mobile, ala.
and graduated from
high school in tampa, fla.

during the vietnam
war, he was a member
of the ma-
rines
special forces

mr. tools last job
had been with
us west communications in denver

yesterday
his wife
daughter
and son
expressed their gratitude to the public
for their prayers
and support



printed in a small edition on my inkjet at home
for my friends



aleksandra mir, valentine's day, 2002.