

Study Reveals Clear Evidence of Life After Death

Is there life after death? As Christians, we know the answer is yes, but a new study may offer confidence to the science-minded who want proof.

According to a four-year State University of New York study, which examined 2,060 cardiac-arrest cases across 15 hospitals, there is indeed life after death.

“Contrary to perception, death is not a specific moment but a potentially reversible process that occurs after any severe illness or accident causes the heart, lungs and brain to cease functioning,” says Dr. Sam Parnia, assistant professor of Critical Care Medicine and director of Resuscitation Research at The State University of New York, and the study’s lead author.

“If attempts are made to reverse this process, it is referred to as ‘cardiac arrest.’ However, if these attempts do not succeed, it is called ‘death.’ In this study we wanted to go beyond the emotionally charged yet poorly defined term of NDEs to explore objectively what happens when we die.”

The study reveals themes relating to the experience of death appear far broader than what has been understood so far, or what has been described as so called near-death experiences (NDEs). In some cases of cardiac arrest, for example, memories of visual awareness compatible with so-called out-of-body experiences (OBEs) may correspond with actual events.

For example, the study shows 39 percent of patients who survived cardiac arrest and were able to undergo structured interviews described a perception of awareness, but interestingly did not have any explicit recall of events.

“This suggests more people may have mental activity initially but then lose their memories after recovery, either due to the effects of brain injury or sedative drugs on memory recall,” says Parnia.

Among those who reported a perception of awareness and completed further interviews, 46 percent experienced a “broad range” of mental recollections in relation to death that were not compatible with the commonly used term of NDEs. These included fearful and persecutory experiences.

Only 9 percent had experiences compatible with NDEs and 2 percent exhibited full awareness compatible with OBEs with explicit recall of “seeing” and “hearing” events. One case was validated and timed using auditory stimuli during cardiac arrest.

“This is significant, since it has often been assumed that experiences in relation to death are likely hallucinations or illusions, occurring either before the heart stops or after the heart has been successfully restarted, but not an experience corresponding with ‘real’ events when the heart isn’t beating,” Parnia explains.

In this case, he says, consciousness and awareness appeared to occur during a three-minute period when there was no heartbeat. This is paradoxical, he continues, since the brain typically ceases functioning within 20 to 30 seconds of the heart stopping and doesn’t resume again until the heart has been restarted. What’s more, the detailed recollections of visual awareness in this case were consistent with verified events.

“Thus, while it was not possible to absolutely prove the reality or meaning of patients’ experiences and claims of awareness—due to the very low incidence (2 percent) of explicit recall of visual awareness or so called OBEs—it was impossible to disclaim them either and more work is needed in

this area," Parnia says. "Clearly, the recalled experience surrounding death now merits further genuine investigation without prejudice."