



Dr. Samuel Lee Kountz Jr., Kidney Specialist

Dr. Samuel Lee Kountz Jr. set a goal for himself when he was only eight years old. At that very young age, he decided to become a doctor. Thank goodness he didn't stop with just that one goal! Our lives may depend on his contribution to medical science, even if our kidneys are functioning perfectly.

Dr. Kountz obtained a master's degree in biochemistry at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and was one of the first African Americans admitted to its medical school (University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, 1958). Medical science was just beginning to perform transplants—taking an organ from a dying person and “hooking it up” inside of another. One of the biggest problems with this kind of procedure was that the dying person was not usually near the person who needed a new kidney. Getting the kidney to the patient was difficult, because it had to be kept clean and fresh or it would kill the person receiving it! Kountz became an authority on kidney transportation, and he even performed an operation live on the *NBC Today* show.

But transporting the kidney to the patient was only one of many problems with transplanting organs. The body of the person who gets the new organ doesn't really know that the organ is there to help out. It is the body's natural process to reject or try to kill anything that is in it that doesn't belong there. This is where Dr. Kountz helped out again. He spent many years helping to determine how to give special drugs to the person with the new kidney so that the body would stop trying to get rid of it. These drugs are called “anti-rejection drugs” and they are dangerous and very powerful. The dosage that is given to the patient must be monitored very closely or the patient will die. Dr. Kountz specialized in learning just how to manage the amount of drugs that a person needs and how to constantly change and adjust the medicines so that they will be just right for the person with the new organ.

He is important to all of us because of his research in this area. As transplants become more and more common in these modern times, we may need his research and studies to help ourselves or someone we love to be able to have an organ transplant.

Dr. Kountz established the largest kidney transplant research and training program in the country at the University of California, San Francisco. He died in 1981.

By Mary Rose



Dear Parents

Dr. Samuel Lee Kountz was a pioneer in kidney transplant surgery, a determined man who followed through on his childhood dream to become a doctor. The accompanying article describes his many accomplishments and contains some challenging vocabulary; please help your child understand what a transplant is and what anti-rejection drugs are.

TIP OF THE WEEK

Determining the main idea of a piece is challenging for kids, but you can help your child by encouraging him or her to summarize the "big idea" in one sentence. As your child thinks about it, recommend that he or she:

- * Check the title
- * Reread the opening paragraph
- * Reread the closing paragraph

The Questions

1. State the main idea of this passage in your own words: _____

2. List at least three supporting details found in this article about Dr. Samuel Lee Kountz:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature