

The first color photograph in a scientific article: The heart of the dog that changed the history of medicine?

La primera fotografía a color en un artículo científico: ¿El corazón del perro que cambió la historia de la medicina?

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Key words: Scientific article, Experimental studies, Surgical anastomosis, Coronary artery bypass graft
Palabras Clave: Artículo científico, Estudios Experimentales, Anastomosis quirúrgica, Revascularización miocárdica quirúrgica

Presumably, in the first half of the 1940s, Canadian surgeon Arthur Vineberg pioneered the first implantation of the left internal thoracic artery in dog myocardium, to demonstrate the formation of anastomotic channels between coronary vessels and extracardiac sources of blood supply. Dog 8A, killed 99 days after operation, clearly showed these anastomoses for the first time. Vineberg, trying to demonstrate his finding in more detail, sought the help of a photographic studio in Chicago which (from a black and white photograph published a year earlier) created a color version of the dog's heart, which masterfully shows the distribution, in the entire left coronary artery tree, of a Schlesinger solution injected through the implanted mammary artery. Those shown in our article (with permission of the Canadian Medical Association Journal), are the first two of a total of four color photographs that the above mentioned Journal published in an article in

1947. For three years we have unsuccessfully tried to find a color photograph in previous scientific articles. Obviously, between the invention of the technique and the year 1947 thousands of investigations must have been published in hundreds of journals, many of which were probably never taken to digital format, so the whole search becomes humanly impossible. It is noteworthy that the development of color photography was still incipient at that time, only carried out by a few studies in the world, and it is unlikely that before Vineberg another researcher would have made such an effort to obtain images with that specific characteristic. Furthermore, a Google search for "first color photograph in a scientific article" or similar variants in different languages does not yield any results. Vineberg's findings in dog 8A undoubtedly changed the history of medicine forever. Three years after that publication, the Canadian surgeon first implanted a mammary artery in a human heart. The subsequent improvements in this technique would probably lead, in 1958, to the first direct anastomosis of an internal mammary artery with a coronary vessel; paving the way for the development of multiple variants of aorto-coronary grafts, and man began to fight –with keener weapons– his war to the death against ischemic heart disease.

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