Cherelle Jobe

Dr. Chaudhuri

Capstone

Henriette Lacks

The absence of Henrietta Lacks could have been a complete devastation to medical research, medical advancement and medical knowledge in our present day. Although, Henrietta was exploited by medical professionals, without her contributions many cures would be nonexistent in the science of medicine as of today. The Hela cell line was the first cell line that was immortalized was from Henrietta Lacks who was an African American woman from Virginia. She was diagnosed with cancer in the 1970s and two samples were obtained from her cervix without her consent. These cells have been used for the past fifty years for medical research and other commercial purposes (Skloot, 2013). The Hela cell line is popular and demand increased in the 1980s for scientists who needed to conduct research on cancer, AIDS, and other scientific purposes. Henrietta Lack’s family, however, was not aware of the Hela cell line until 1975. This raised concern across the world for the patent and privacy rights for the commercial use of the Hela cells. The family took the matter to court but lost the case. This resulted in lack of compensation to the family until today (Masters, 2002). After persistent efforts by the family, some recognition has been given to Henrietta across the world for her contribution to medicine. Efforts, however, need to be put by the government towards compensating Henrietta Lacks’ family for the use of the Hela cell line in medical research (Lucey, Nelson-Rees, and Hutchins, 2009).