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Henrietta Lacks loved to dance and sing; she was devoted to her five children and to her church. In 1951, at the age of 30, Lacks was diagnosed with cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Doctors took tissue samples without her consent, a standard medical practice then.

A lab scientist soon discovered that Lacks' tumor cells replicated extraordinarily fast and were extremely robust. In less than two years, cells grown from the tumor, called HeLa cells, were being shared all over the world, rapidly contributing to science's understanding of cancer and cell reproduction.

HeLa cells have been used to test and develop vaccines, to provide the basis for over 60,000 scientific papers, and to create the medical field of virology, the study of the spread of diseases such as HIV and Zika.

Lacks died nine months after her diagnosis, leaving her children destitute. Like their mother, her children were neither notified about nor compensated for the use of her cells, which have enriched individuals, biomedical labs, and pharmaceutical companies around the globe. Lacks' family continued to live in poverty, and only learned of their mother's contribution to medical science with the 2011 publication of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot.

I have portrayed Henrietta Lacks in a dorsal lithotomy position as she relinquishes control, submits to treatment, and succumbs to disease. I will place a hat between her legs to give her a little dignity and modesty. Her shoes, worn during hours of happy dancing, remain nearby.