

2009

The Incision into the Realm of Science

Chase Taylor

Jason Neeley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/inquiro>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Taylor, Chase and Neeley, Jason (2009) "The Incision into the Realm of Science," *Inquiro, the UAB undergraduate science research journal*: Vol. 2009: No. 3, Article 16.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/inquiro/vol2009/iss3/16>

This content has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the UAB Digital Commons, and is provided as a free open access item. All inquiries regarding this item or the UAB Digital Commons should be directed to the [UAB Libraries Office of Scholarly Communication](#).

The Incision into the Realm of Science

Chase Taylor
& Jason Neeley

Suddenly, in the midst of mid-afternoon, my cell phone rings with the tune of a familiar number. I answer the phone with a friendly, "Hello, Leslie," not knowing what to expect. I was soon asked to enroll in a newly restructured advanced dissection class with Dr. Dana Peterson and Leslie Hendon as the instructors. "Oh my, I have a full schedule this semester, there is no way I can do this," I replied with great apprehension.

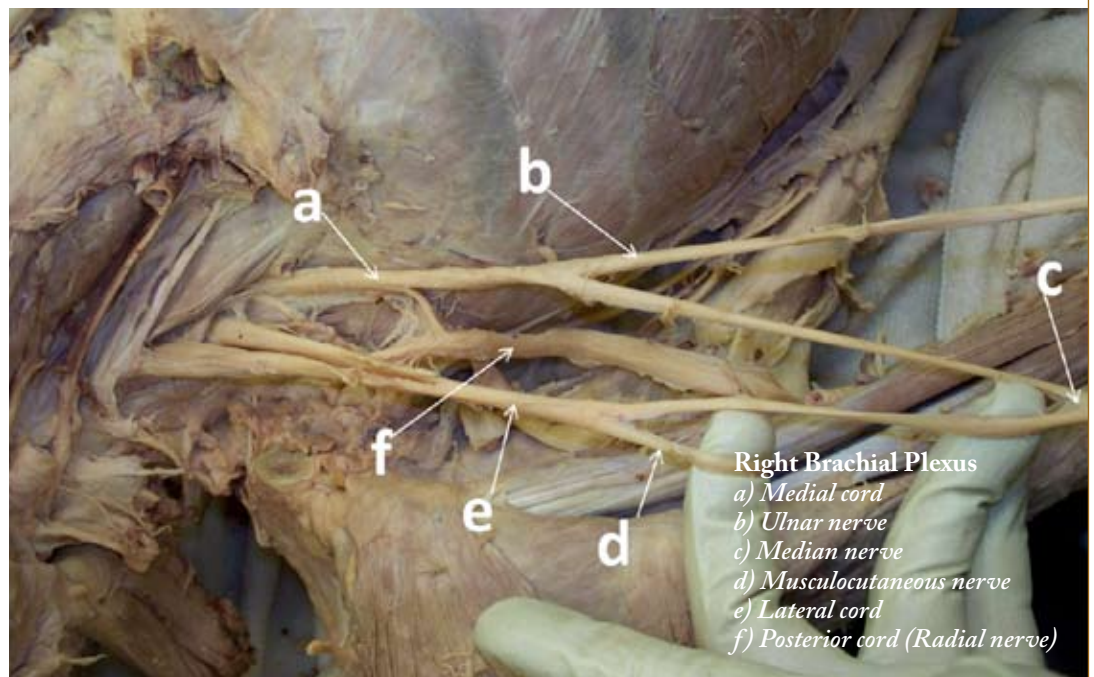
"I think that you can handle it, it will be an awesome experience. Besides it will take your mind off the rest of your classes and at the same time, you will be earning credit. And, you will have so much fun!" Leslie exclaimed.

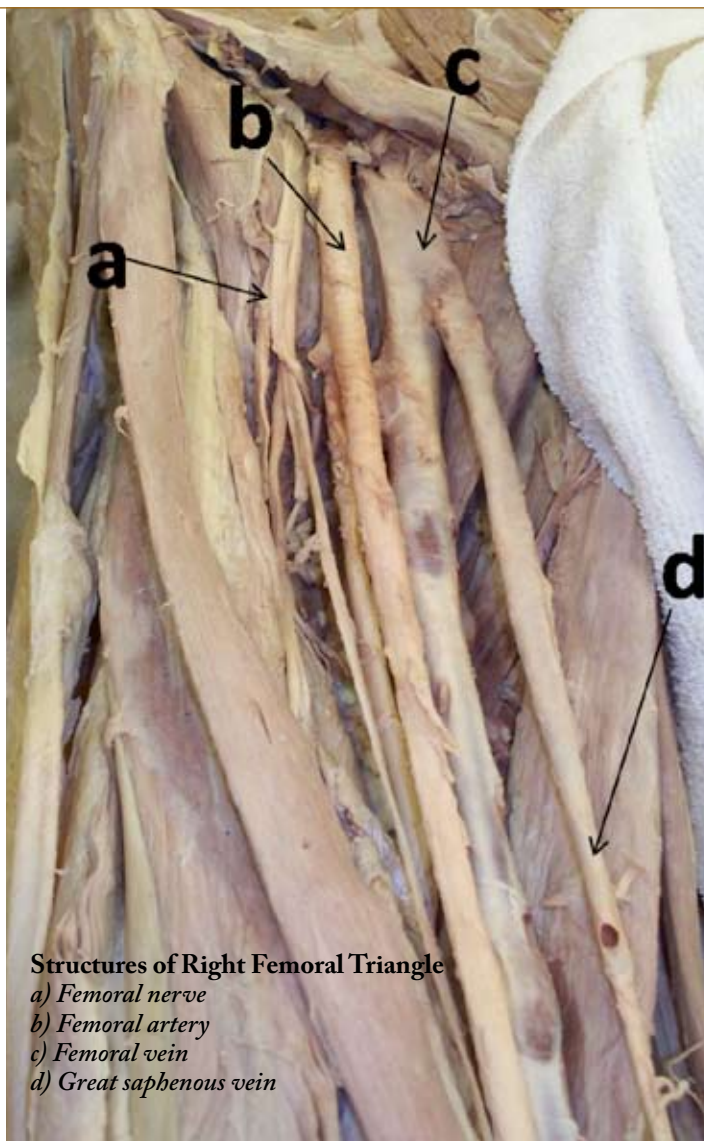
As the conversation continued, I began to think to myself, "Why not? I already have so many positive academic activities; why not dive into another course that I can be passionate about." As a result, I answered, "Okay, okay, I will do it!" It was that particular telephone call that would add hours to my fall semester class schedule and a new excitement in life.

When my partner Jason Neeley and I unzipped the cadaver bag for the first time, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I was there. I was about to dissect a human cadaver and I am not even in medical school, let alone a doctor of any sort – just an undergraduate student that has a passion for medicine and all the surprises it offers. I soon grasped the scalpel with a nervousness that I had never felt before. It was as if I had fallen asleep and had begun to dream just as a child would if they had discovered the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and didn't know what to do. As time passed and the integument was removed, there were several incisions that I made that were deeper than I had wanted, but as I glanced at the hour hand on my wrist watch during our initial lab session, I discovered that Jason and I had already been in the lab for four hours. It was now time to go home and get some rest before my eight o'clock class the following day.

Lying there in bed that Wednesday night reflecting back on my first time with a scalpel in my hand, I was both a happy

and frustrated young man. I had made an incision in the skin of the posterior torso with the intention of removing the integument from around the area of the trapezius and latissimus dorsi while leaving behind the superficial nerves and veins. No more did I advance the length of my incision in the medial to lateral direction than I realized I had severed the latissimus dorsi. Not only was this a terrible feeling to have on the first night in the lab, but it also made me realize that there is a little more to dissecting a cadaver than simply slicing away until revealing musculature as perfect as the anatomy diagrams from my dissection book. Although I was not careless with my dissection, I learned that there are certain precautions and techniques that must be practiced in the laboratory. Also, I concluded that there would be challenges that I would have to overcome in order to gain the most from this course. For instance, I had never held the tools that one uses to dissect or manipulate the human body. The only information that I came into lab knowing was what I had read from the required textbook, *Grant's Dissector*, and the knowledge I had gained from the human anatomy course that I had taken previously. I initially followed the instructions of which instruments to use during my dissection, but I quickly realized that this was a unique experience





Structures of Right Femoral Triangle

- a) Femoral nerve
- b) Femoral artery
- c) Femoral vein
- d) Great saphenous vein

and that in order for my dissections to be perfected, I would need to develop my own unique methods. In doing so, I have learned that the careful execution and time that I put into each dissection is precious.

Trust me, there were times we would much rather have chosen to be at home on the weekends watching college football and visiting with friends and family, but we were committed to our dissection efforts.

As we acquired a new respect for the value of the hands-on experience gained during our time in lab, another aspect of our lab experience began to hit us in a very profound way. The reality that total strangers donate their bodies to science so that we might gain intellectual insight struck both Jason and I as an invaluable gift. I never imagined that taking a biology class in college would change my view on science so drastically. It is only science – how sentimental could it be? Well, in fact, it has the ability to be very sentimental. It is one thing to know that my family supports my future academic goals, but knowing there are people in the community that I have never met or even knew existed, that care just as much, if not more, that are invested in our futures as health care professionals, is truly inspiring. There were times in the lab when I was exhausted and wanted to lay down my scalpel and go home, but I always remembered how much this research meant to the individual who donated his/her body to science and realizing this inspired me to maintain concentration and carry on with the tasks for that day. Overall, the immense appreciation that Jason and I gained from this course was moving and life-changing.

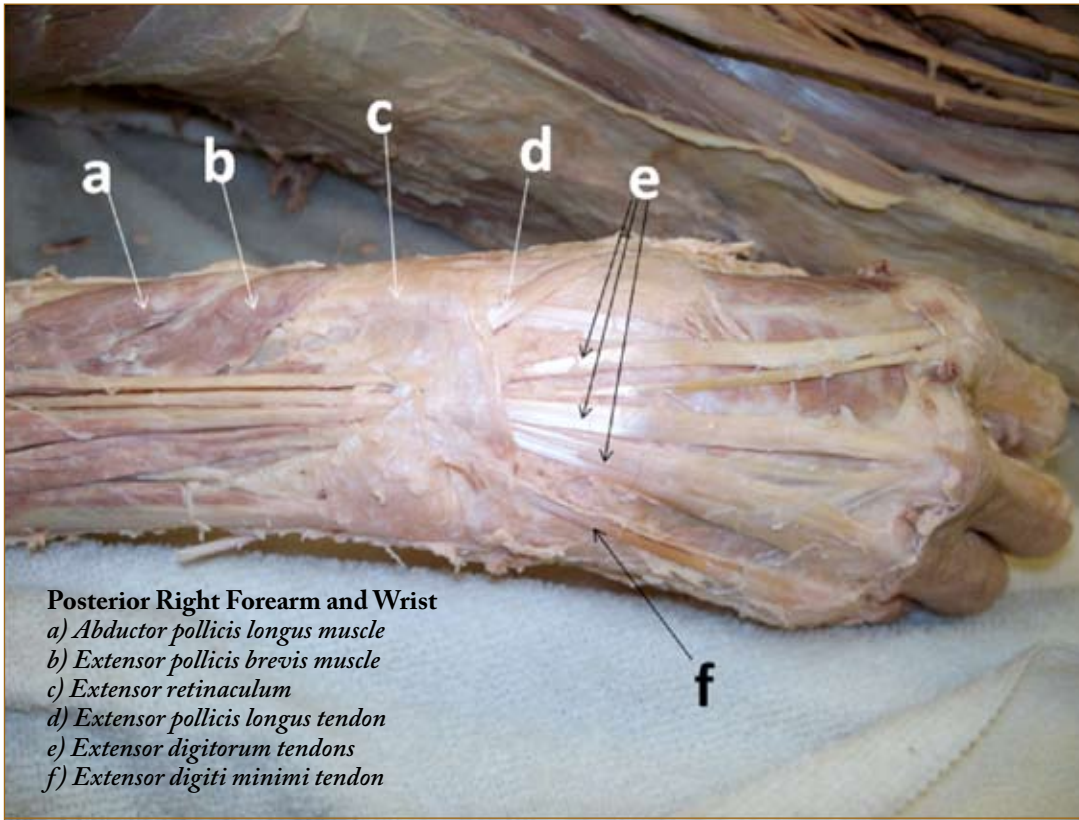
Nevertheless, aside from the newly acquired dissection skills and the new appreciation for science, our work continued to be mostly tedious. It was paramount never to rush any dissection procedure, whether it was removing the superficial fascia from the skeletal muscles or separating the individual nerves of the brachial plexus. In addition, it became particularly important to be aware of what was in the immediate proximity of the area being dissected. If these structures are not clearly understood it is easy to reveal the unforgiving nature of the scalpel. However, our time spent dissecting progressed with great speed. For example, I went to the

...I was overwhelmed with emotion. I was there. I was about to dissect a human cadaver and I am not even in medical school, let alone a doctor of any sort – just an undergraduate student that has a passion for medicine and all the surprises it offers.

So, Jason and I continued on with countless hours of dissection on numerous occasions inside the cadaver lab, studying and examining every aspect of the cadaveric anatomy that we revealed. As a result, we were able to turn what were initially amateurish, casual explorations, into impressively detailed dissections. However, our expertise did not come without cost. We spent approximately fifteen to twenty hours per week in the lab in order to meet the goals that we had set for ourselves, in addition to the many study hours the rest of our courses demanded for success.

lab one morning at six o'clock with the intent of spending a couple of hours dissecting and leaving in time to take a shower and make it to class by ten. However, I suddenly realized that four hours had already passed and there was now no time to shower before class started. Needless to say, I went to class smelling of formaldehyde, but with the glow of satisfaction from the opportunity to gain greater understanding and appreciation of human anatomy.

➔ *top of page 14*



Posterior Right Forearm and Wrist

- a) *Abductor pollicis longus muscle*
- b) *Extensor pollicis brevis muscle*
- c) *Extensor retinaculum*
- d) *Extensor pollicis longus tendon*
- e) *Extensor digitorum tendons*
- f) *Extensor digiti minimi tendon*

The decision to enroll in an advanced cadaveric dissection course, BY 398, with instructors Dr. Dana Peterson and Leslie Hendon, has been one of the most valuable and rewarding choices of my academic career. UAB is one of the few institutions in the nation that offers a cadaveric anatomy course to undergraduates. I would encourage all those who have decided on a future career in science or medicine to consider enrolling in the advanced dissection class, so that they too, might uncover their own passion for science and research.