

# The benefits of dr. josef mengele's research essay sample

[Science](#), [Genetics](#)



The Benefits of Dr. Josef Mengele's Research Humanity has prospered for years because of the discoveries of the medical community. Many of the discoveries have been results of laboratory experiments on animals. While some of this research has not always been pleasant for the animals, the discoveries uncovered significantly compensate for the countless lives lost during the research. During the Holocaust at the concentration camp at Auschwitz different kinds of subjects were used for experimentation. Dr. Josef Mengele, the camp doctor, focused his work on living humans. The results found during the experimentation by Dr. Mengele helped lead to advancements in the modern medical field despite the numerous lives lost and discomfort inflicted on the test subjects.

Before Dr. Mengele was assigned to Auschwitz he led a distinguished career in genetic research. For his doctorate, Mengele did genetic research dealing with oral fissures. This genetic research seems "like a precursor to his later work in Auschwitz" (Lifton Doctors 339). He volunteered to go to Auschwitz in 1943 so he could perform medical and anthropological experiments to further his studies. Mengele's belief that the Aryan race is superior to all other races significantly shaped his scientific view. One of Mengele's assistants stated that he wanted to use his research "to find the cause of multiple pregnancies" so that he could utilize the information to cause Aryan women to have an increased chance of having twin births. This would allow the Aryan race to multiply at a quicker rate. The main intent was to extract the "bad" genes from the population to create a superior human race, specifically Germanic ("Angel").

Research was conducted at Auschwitz with subjects above two years old and centered mainly around twins and people with the genetic disorder known as dwarfism. Every patient was subject to questions about medical and family history (especially twins), clinical examinations, x-rays, mandatory daily blood tests, and anthropological measurements. Normal medical precautions for patients were not used; for example, anesthesia was not administered, protective coverings during x-rays were not required, and consideration of blood loss was not a concern in the daily withdrawing of samples.

Mengele studied maternal and fraternal twins. He was fascinated most by identical twins. Robert Lifton states in his book *The Nazi Doctors*, “Measurements were taken of the twin’s skulls and bodies and various characteristics of the nose, lips, ears, hair and eyes”. An anonymous patient said, “It was like a laboratory [...] there isn’t a piece of body that wasn’t measured and compared” (Lifton “Mengele”). Spinal taps were given to some of the subjects to test reactions. Mengele would also take one twin’s blood sample and inject it into the other twin’s blood stream. Some twins and other people that Mengele studied had their limbs and organs removed, while others were castrated or sterilized. He intended on doing other genetic tests in which the sperm of a twin male would be injected into the uterus of a non-twin female. He also planned on having a twin female and a twin male mate as well as injecting male twin blood into a non-twin female all in attempt for the females to bear twin children (Lifton *Doctors* 359).

Twins were studied as in-depth in death as they were studied in life. The *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* states that, “It appears that his research

differs from the other [Nazi doctors] experiments in that the victims death was programmed into his experiments" (964). Dr. Mengele would arrange for twins to die at the same time so his post-mortem dissections could be performed simultaneously. Each twin would be injected intravenously with evipan and after he or she had fallen asleep he would directly inject chloroform into the subject's heart. The bodies would then be dissected and comparisons would be made.

Mengele performed other experiments that were not specified toward twins only. Dwarfs were studied and dissected similarly to the way twins were. Subjects of various races were injected with different diseases to see each race's reaction. He watched for inmates with the condition heterochromia; the condition that a person is born with when the eyes are different colors. The eyes were injected with methylene blue in an attempt to change the color to the desired Aryan eye color (Lifton 5).

These experiments had short and long term affects on the test subjects. The daily withdrawl of blood from some individuals left them very fatigued and led to death in some instances. The blood exchange of different blood types caused a " searingly painful headache and high fever that lasted for several days" (" Angel"). The spinal taps carried out left many paralyzed, deaf, or unconscious and some , depending on the age of the patient, died. The diseases that were injected to test the reaction of the different races had different outcomes depending on the disease. Inevitably, many of the patients died, because no antibiotics were administered to help the body fight off the infections. One case is recorded about Mengele sterilizing a

group of Polish nuns by an x-ray machine. This left the women not only sterile, but severely burned ("Angel"). Also, when he attempted to change an individual's eye color it would leave them blind for days, cause eye infections, and/or permanent blindness.

A number of countries recognized the experiments of the Nazis and deemed them useful after World War II (Caplan 24). Several things can be learned specifically from Dr. Mengele's research. First and foremost, the experimentation Mengele did helped in the understanding of modern genetics. He was well on his way, before his work was cut short by the liberation of Auschwitz, to discovering how genetics truly work. He was starting to understand that twin births have something to do with the initial conception. It seems as though he understood that twin births are more likely to occur when there is a family history of twin births.

Secondly, he progressed in the area of eye color research. While there is no proof, it can be assumed that Mengele concluded that eye color can only be determined by one's genetic code. None of the subjects tested had a change in eye color. Scientists can conclude that eye color can only be changed physically (by the use of colored contacts), not chemically. Therefore, Mengele indirectly helped to lead to the invention of colored contacts. This is the only way that the modern medical field knows to change eye color.

Finally, one can say that his blood research helped to elaborate on Karl Landsteiner's work in 1901 that determined multiple blood types (Blood). Landsteiner's work can be reinforced by the way the patients reacted to the

twin-to-twin blood transfusions. It can be concurred that there is a reason why humans cannot exchange any blood, and that can only be explained by accepting that there are different blood types.

Dr. Mengele has obviously acted as a foundation in the modern research of genetics and blood transfusion. One reason for his success is attributed to the manner in which he treated his test subjects. They were treated as laboratory animals while he was inspecting, testing, and dissecting them. An anonymous person subjected to his experiments said, " We were made to feel like animals" (Spegal). However, he treated the children very kindly when they were not in the laboratory. Some of the twin children even referred to him as " Uncle Pepi" (Lifton Doctors 355). This treatment kept the children feeling safe and happy enough for him to continue his experiments. Ultimately, more could probably be determined about Mengele's research and its rewards, but his documentation is lost. It is believed that Mengele took much of the data with him when he escaped Auschwitz during the liberation, or that the Nazi party destroyed it later.