Lab-grown rat heart brings custom organs closer
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Published: January 14, 2007
Source: News and Observer

Tissue engineering is a growing scientific field. For years doctors have created cartilage for joint repairs and created skin for burn patients. Also, researchers are hopeful in repairing cardiac muscle damaged by heart attack patients with the use of stem cells. On Sunday January 13th, a beating rat heart was created by University of Minnesota researchers in their laboratory. They created a new rat heart by using a dead rat’s heart as a scaffold, stripping away cells from the heart - leaving the outer structure and valves, and injecting new heart cells from newborn rats. As a result, the cells started to form a new beating heart within two weeks and even pumped a minute amount of blood.

Scientists believe this is the beginning of being able to actually grow a human heart. By taking the stem cells from the bone marrow of a person and placing the cells in a scaffold cadaver heart, scientists are very hopeful that they will be able to produce a beating human heart. But they don’t plan on stopping there. They believe they will be able to create any organ including the liver, pancreas, kidneys or lungs. Although researchers are hopeful for engineering human organs, it will be at least 10 years before that dream may actually come true.
In my opinion, I think this research is amazing but a little scary. If researchers successfully grow a human heart who’s to say that it won’t bring about complications for the person receiving it. This heart was grown in a small animal and could cause some major problems in a human being. If this did happen in humans I think many people would have ethical concerns with the procedure. I think a few people would see this as “playing God” by extending life in this manner.