

## Sixteen Years in the Making, National Geographic Unveils a Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Creation of the Highest-Quality Imagery of a Human Body in Existence

Today, National Geographic releases "[The Immortal Corpse](#)," a story, 16-years in the making, that chronicles the life, death and digital resurrection of Susan Potter and her impact on the future of medicine for decades to come. In donating her body to science to become the highest-resolution virtual cadaver to date, Potter has allowed the medical community to go deeper than ever before in understanding the inner-workings of the human body. In an effort to find a more effective approach to anatomical medical education and research, Dr. Vic Spitzer Ph.D., director of the Center for Human Simulation at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, worked on the National Library of Medicine's Visible Human Project. By taking photographic slices through a cadaver, Spitzer realized the full potential of the approach when Potter, an ailment-ridden, wheelchair-bound 72-year old woman, entered Spitzer's life in the year 2000. From shortly after the time Potter's donation was agreed upon, until the time of her death more than a decade later, her life was documented by National Geographic and Dr. Spitzer across a multitude of interviews, photos and video testimonials. Upon her death, Potter's body was encased in polyvinyl alcohol, frozen and later sliced 27,000 times. After each pass, her body was photographed, and these individual images were digitized and electronically reassembled to create the world's most advanced virtual cadaver using the highest-quality imagery of an entire human body in existence. The swath of images, videos and testimonials Potter left behind will provide medical students and professionals with a personal narrative that connects to Potter's physical composition – a medical development never before accessible with cadavers, and which allows for a more holistic experience for those in the medical field. "While the story of Susan Potter and her decision to give her body to science is certainly a story of death, what makes it unique is that it's also a story of hope and the medical advancements to come," said Susan Goldberg, editor in chief of National Geographic magazine and editorial director of National Geographic Partners. "When we're able to pair breakthrough, science-based journalism with characters as eccentric as Potter, we're able to illustrate that for every innovative treatment or discovery that comes with the future of medicine, there's also a person with a unique story to tell." "The Immortal Corpse," which publishes today as part of National Geographic's special edition, single-topic issue on the "[Future of Medicine](#)," is the publisher's longest lead-time piece in history. Coverage of this story began in 2002 and has come to fruition under the guidance of three National Geographic editors in chief, across the terms of three U.S. presidents and nearly two decades of unparalleled medical innovation. The story of the Visible Human Project is just one example of new developments we are seeing across the medical spectrum, and those that are chronicled in "[The Future of Medicine](#)." The issue takes an in-depth look at the development of precision medicine practices that will tailor prevention, diagnosis, and treatment to an individual's biochemical makeup. It also looks at how a new generation is embracing ancient Chinese remedies and why the United States posts one of the developed world's highest rates of pregnancy-related deaths. For more than a century, National Geographic has been at the forefront of modern-day science, technology and cutting-edge journalism, bringing its global audience stories of breakthroughs that have major societal impact, and "The Future of Medicine" takes this mission one step further. By infusing fact-forward stories of science and medicine with captivating characters and a spellbinding dimension of human interest, National Geographic's science and medical content becomes instantly relatable and resonates across demographics. Select features from within "The Future of Medicine" include the

following.

- Despite medical advances, the U.S. is one of only two developed countries where the rate of women who die from pregnancy is increasing rather than falling, and women around the world continue to die during or due to childbirth in ways that are entirely preventable. In "[Giving Life Can Still Be Deadly](#)," photographed by award-winning war photographer, Lynsey Addario, National Geographic brings an under-reported battle against maternal mortality into a cogent perspective.
- "[Every Body Is Unique](#)" offers a deep dive into the world of precision medicine, an area of highly individualized healthcare treatments teetering at the edge of the medical frontier. While some see precision medicine as the beginning of the end of deadly cancers and a path to early warnings around ailments such as Alzheimer's, others argue that the million-dollar therapies—that work on exactly one person—offer more hype than hope, and could potentially lead to hackable health data and high-cost false alarms. In this story National Geographic explores a multitude of unique, character-driven stories of current precision treatments, as well as the future of highly individualized medical care.
- In "[Can Ancient Remedies Be Tomorrow's Cures](#)," National Geographic offers readers a glimpse of how one of the most ancient forms of healthcare is impacting the future of medicine. Traditional Chinese medicine, a broad range of Eastern remedies that have accrued over thousands of years, has led to the recent development of treatments for liver disease, gallstones, and malaria. In the story, National Geographic looks at the surprising potential Chinese medicine offers scientists.

"The Future of Medicine" is available online now at [natgeo.com/futureofmedicine](http://natgeo.com/futureofmedicine) and on print newsstands December 21st. ### **FOR MEDIA** Spokespeople and visuals available. View media assets here. **PRESS CONTACT** Kelsey Taylor, [Kelsey.Taylor@natgeo.com](mailto:Kelsey.Taylor@natgeo.com) , 202-912-6776 **ABOUT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS LLC** National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between National Geographic and 21st Century Fox, is committed to bringing the world premium science, adventure and exploration content across an unrivaled portfolio of media assets. NGP combines the global National Geographic television channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO, Nat Geo PEOPLE) with National Geographic's media and consumer-oriented assets, including National Geographic magazines; National Geographic studios; related digital and social media platforms; books; maps; children's media; and ancillary activities that include travel, global experiences and events, archival sales, licensing and e-commerce businesses. Furthering knowledge and understanding of our world has been the core purpose of National Geographic for 130 years, and now we are committed to going deeper, pushing boundaries, going further for our consumers ... and reaching millions of people around the world in 172 countries and 43 languages every month as we do it. NGP returns 27 percent of our proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education. For more information visit [natgeotv.com](http://natgeotv.com) or [nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com), or find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Pinterest](#).