

Lifeline

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What has been the greatest achievement of your career?

To have received a US National Institutes of Health Director's Early Independence Award, which allowed me to launch my independent lab and start the COLBOS (Colombia–Boston) Project to bring individuals from Colombian families with early-onset Alzheimer's disease to Boston for advanced imaging.

Who inspires you?

Professionally, my patients and their families. Everything we do in my lab is with the hope of stopping Alzheimer's disease. Personally, my children and husband are my inspiration.

If you were Bill Gates, how would you spend your fortune?

Training the next generations of neuroscientists from underprivileged communities and countries, all the way from elementary school to college and graduate schools.

Who was your most influential teacher, and why?

One of my college professors at the University of Antioquia (Medellin, Colombia). He knew that I was going to be a researcher even before I knew it. He went the extra mile to get me involved in research, created opportunities for my professional advancement, and nominated me for a national student award that changed my life forever.

How do you relax?

Playing with my kids and spending time with my husband, family, and friends.

What is your greatest fear?

That my generation will not find a cure for Alzheimer's disease, and that our children will have to care for their parents with this terrible disease.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

One that I have enough time to work on a project I'm excited about, to have at least one conversation with my trainees, and to spend quality time with my husband and kids.

What was your first experiment as a child?

I made soap, a green and sticky soap. It was not very popular.



Exhibition

Art at the intersection of near-death experience

Death can be seen as an uncanny and morbid notion that has puzzled human civilisation since almost the dawn of our time. Important yet simple questions dominate the natural end of the human life cycle: what happens to an individual's consciousness and identity when they pass away? Human consciousness and self-identity are profound aspects of existence that are governed by the brain, but the ancient Egyptians instead described the afterlife as a journey of the soul through the underworld. This journey was guided and judged by the various Egyptian gods to determine the deceased's virtues and, ultimately, whether they were worthy of an eternal life through rebirth.

To date, several anecdotes about out-of-body or near-death experiences have been reported, with individuals claiming to have seen lucid visions, ranging from their life flashing before their eyes to white lights at the end of a tunnel. But what is really happening in these penultimate moments of death? Theories based on spiritual concepts or transcendence are common throughout history, but several emerging scientific models—ranging from psychological to physiological explanations—are attempting to answer these important questions about identity,

death, and the notion of an afterlife. But for Shivinder Grewal, whose life was paused by cardiac arrest and a subsequent month-long induced coma 5 years ago, his explanation of the afterlife comprises a digital artwork exhibition called *REBOOT*, presented at the Karma Sanctum Soho Hotel, London, UK.

At first glance, the experience of this exhibition was odd: juxtaposed with the displayed artworks on the wall were tables occupied by customers dining, drinking, and laughing. But upon closer observation, the carefully curated exhibition and the chosen setting conveyed an important message of contrast between death and life, mirrored respectively in the displayed inanimate artwork on the walls and the bustling activity of people. Grewal's exhibition takes another turn; unlike traditional artwork created with common mediums such as paint, his vivid and abstract digital artwork lives up to the definition of contemporary art. The discussion of mortality is always a sensitive topic, and Grewal should be commended for his courage in publicly sharing such a personal story of his near-death experience.

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For more on **Shivinder Grewal's work** see <http://shivinder.co.uk/>