

[Global throat](#) [1]

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The world's first [synthetic organ transplant](#) [3] this past week was exciting news, indeed. Amid the more usual tales of doom and gloom, this event lifted the spirits. Beyond the obvious triumph of science and technology is another notable feature – its global nature.

The operation to transplant the windpipe was conducted in Sweden's Karolinska University Hospital. The lead surgeon was an Italian, Paolo Macchiarini. The trachea was made by scientists at University College in London under the leadership of Alex Seifalian. The recipient was a 36-year old African from Eritrea now living in Iceland and studying for a PhD.

I don't know of Dr Seifalian's origins but his team at UCL's Division of Surgery and Interventional Science has names like Burriesci, Ogunbiyi, Keshtgar, Loizidou, Patkar and Thune-Boyle. And, yes, there's a Welch, a Williams, a Davidson and a Cousins.

Dr Macchiarini is now chairman of the Hospital Clinic at Spain's University of Barcelona and a professor of surgery at the Hannover Medical School in Germany. He had previously completed fellowships at the University of Alabama and Paris-Sud University.

A key component of the equipment to create the synthetic organ was made by researchers at Harvard Bioscience in Holliston, Massachusetts. No doubt, there were scores of other people and bits of equipment from all over the world involved in this landmark achievement.

All in all, a great global enterprise and a salutary lesson to any policymaker seeking to throttle (sorry, about that) the free flow of people, ideas and initiative. No formal government policy could ever bring together such a disparate range of talent.

Just let the gifted, the ambitious and the imaginative get on with whatever they want, wherever they want, with whomever they choose. We'll all be better off.

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