

# UCLA Neurologist: Jahi “Alive!” “Awake!”

By Wesley J. Smith, October 4, 2014

I know and deeply respect Dr. Alan Shewmon, professor emeritus in neurology at UCLA. He is a world renowned expert on the brain, particularly dealing with pediatrics.

A source has sent me a declaration under penalty of perjury that Shewmon signed on October 3, 2014, *testifying that Jahi McMath is not only alive, but now also awake!* From his declaration (my emphases):

Based on the materials provided to me so far, *I can assert unequivocally that Jahi currently does not fulfill the diagnostic criteria for brain death.* The materials include extensive medical records from St. Peter’s University Hospital, which I am still in the process of reviewing, videos of Jahi moving her hand and her foot in response to verbal requests by her mother, images from an EEG done in her apartment on 9/1/14, images of a brain MRI scan done at Rutgers on 9/26/2014, and heart rate variability analysis by my colleague Dr. Calizto Machado based on the EKG channel from 9/1/14 EEG.

Wait, there’s more:

*Jahi does not currently fulfill criteria for brain death on several grounds.* First and foremost, the videos and the personal testimonies to me of several trustworthy *witnesses of her motor responsiveness* (yourself [lawyer Nolan], Drs. DeFina and Machado) *leave no doubt that Jahi is conscious* and can not only hear but even understand simple verbal requests (“move your hand,” “Move your foot,” even, “move your thumb.”) Thus, *the very first of the “three cardinal findings in brain death,”* according to the American Academy of Neurology’s Practice Parameters for Determining Brain Death in Adults (and all other diagnostic criteria for brain death that have ever been proposed, for that matter)—namely “*coma or unresponsiveness*”—*is not fulfilled.*

More, Jahi now has periods:

Corpses do not menstruate. Neither do corpses undergo sexual maturation. Neither is there any precedent in the medical literature of a brain-dead body beginning menarche and having regular menstrual periods.

The MRI:

Jahi’s recent MRI scan shows vast areas of structural preserved brain, particularly the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia and cerebellum. There is major damage to the corpus callosum and the brainstem, particularly the pons...corresponding to the severe brainstem dysfunction that has been documented in her progress notes from St. Peter’s.

By contrast, the *relative integrity of the cerebral cortex no doubt underlies her ability to understand language and to make voluntary motor responses.*

Shewmon doesn’t blame the original diagnosing doctors. *Clearly, Jahi is not currently brain dead.* Yet, I have no doubt that at the time of her original diagnosis, she fulfilled the AAN diagnostic criteria, correctly and rigorously applied by the several doctors who independently made the diagnosis then...

*She is an extremely disabled but very much alive teenage girl.*

Shewmon doesn’t believe in brain death—not from a religious but a scientific perspective. That is a heterodox position, with which I disagree when the condition is accurately diagnosed.

But no matter. He is not an advocate but medical doctor and scientist with *an excellent worldwide reputation.*

This is the kind of evidence I said was necessary for this case to go forward. The heft of Shewmon and Machado’s reputation **compel the case be reopened.**

Sometimes, we would be better heeding family observations than smugly assuming—as I have often seen in these kinds of cases—that they are only seeing what they want to see.

Good for Jahi’s family. Good for Bobby Schindler and the Terri Schiavo Life and Hope Network that went to their aid. And good for attorney Chris Dolan, who took a very unpopular case.

Standing up to widespread scorn and derision is never easy—but so worth doing in the cause of what you see to be right.

To view video of Jahi moving hand and foot on command, go to original reference [<http://www.nationalreview.com/human-exceptionalism/389564/ucla-neurologist-jahi-alive-awake-wesley-j-smith>]