Response to A Brief History of Einstein’s Brain

I was an assistant pathologist at Montefiore Hospital under Dr. Harry M. Zimmerman in charge of the day to day running of the Neuropathology section. One morning Dr. Zimmerman called me into his office to tell me that Albert Einstein had died at Princeton Hospital. The pathologist at Princeton Hospital, Dr. Thomas Harvey, had gone to Yale Medical School and had, therefore, studied pathology and neuropathology under Dr. Zimmerman. Dr. Harvey called Dr. Zimmerman and asked him to study the Einstein specimen, since he did not feel adequate to the task. The whole Pathology Department, especially Neuropathology, at Montefiore Hospital became quite excited about the prospect of studying Einstein’s Brain. In addition, there were many calls from reporters. Shortly after, Dr. Harvey told Dr. Zimmerman that Princeton Hospital administrators would not allow the specimen to be transferred, because of the loss of prestige.

The next thing I heard about the specimen was the Diamond paper many years later in Experimental Neurology. She and her technician had obtained some tissue from Dr. Harvey, sectioned it, and stained it with Luxol Fast Blue (Diamond et al., 1985). They believed that this stain differentiated between glia and neurons, but it does not. In normal aging, large neurons shrink. Consequently, Dr. Diamond counted these as glia and reported that Albert Einstein’s genius was the result of having many more glia than normal. Unfortunately, it is not that simple.

Sincerely,
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REGARDING

REFERENCE

“Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.” –Albert Einstein