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Interestingly, gene transcription linked to embryonic development also increased. It's as though parts of the body essentially go back in time, exhibiting cellular characteristics of very early [human](#) development.



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death in reference to post-mortem time because on the one hand, there is no reason to suspect that minutes after an animal dies, gene transcription will abruptly stop."

"On the other hand," he added, "we know that within hours to days, the animal's body will eventually decompose by natural processes and gene transcription will end." The authors referred to the window of time between "death and the start of [decomposition](#) as the 'twilight of death' — when gene expression occurs, but not all of the cells are dead yet."

For years, researchers have noted that recipients of donor organs, such as livers, often exhibit increased risk of cancer following a [transplant](#). The authors indicate there could be a link between "twilight of death" gene transcription and this increased cancer risk.

"It might be useful to prescreen transplant organs for increased cancer gene transcripts," Noble said, which might offer some insight on the health of the organ, though more research is needed.

If such a connection is established, the findings could help to explain why the donated organs of people who were young and healthy before death — for example, if they died in a sudden

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we see a similar pattern in the shutdown of animals."

Putting Death on Hold

Malhotra hopes that the experiments of Noble, Pozhitkov and their team could be repeated with more sampling times—possibly going beyond 48 hours—in order to better understand the identified transcriptional dynamics. Since the new study is the first comprehensive investigation to assess changes in genetic transcription after organismal death, many questions remain.

Malhotra even raised the big question of raising the presumed dead. He wonders now if it might be possible to "put a hold on death" if the molecular processes underlying cellular death could be further determined and if scientists could develop specific ways to "interrupt the shutdown."

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Distant 'Requiem' supernova will be visible again in 2037, astronomers predict

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Parade of life-size camel carvings in northern Arabia date to the Stone Age

By [Stephanie Pappas](#) about 21 hours ago

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Delta-8 marijuana products can be dangerous, health officials warn

By [Rachael Rettner](#) 1 day ago



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Otherworldly 'time crystal' made inside Google quantum computer could change physics forever

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