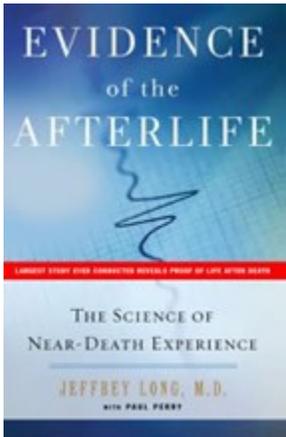


# Dr. Jeffrey Long's Near-Death Experience Research a "Game Changer" for Science

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**The most comprehensive research into near-death experience deals a kill shot to skeptics and aims to change how science views the afterlife.**



Science has studied the near-death experience for more than 20 years. Most research has concluded NDEs are real and unexplainable, but scientists have been slow to accept consciousness beyond death. A new scientific study by Jeffrey Long, M. D. may change that. The research compiled in his new book, *Evidence of the Afterlife*, represents the largest, most comprehensive study of near-death experience and according to the study's author is, "a real game-changer".

Dr. Long explains, "we looked at nine lines of evidence that indicate the reality of near-death experiences and their consistent message of an afterlife. With each of these lines of evidence we carefully reviewed all prior scholarly research on the subject and made our contributions with our original research... from my point of view, the scientific term is compelling, but you can put it another way — the nine lines of evidence that I present is proof of the reality of near-death experiences."

The conclusions of Dr. Long's research are paradigm smashing for near-death experience skeptics who've argued that limited brain functioning may explain NDEs. "What near-death experiencers see correlates to their time of cardiac arrest and it is almost uniformly accurate in every detail. That pretty much refutes the possibility that

these could be illusionary fragments, or unreal memories associated with hypoxia, chemicals, REM intrusion, anything that could cause brain dysfunction”, Dr. Long stated.

“I looked at over 280 near-death experiences that had out-of-body observations of Earthly ongoing events... If near-death experiences were just fragments of memory, unrealistic remembrances of a time approaching unconsciousness or returning from unconsciousness, there is no chance that the observations would have a high percent of completely accurate observations. They’d be dream-like or hallucinations. But 98% of them were entirely realistic... In fact, these observations of Earthly ongoing events often include observations of things that would be impossible for them to be aware of with any sensory function from their physical body. For example, they can see the tops of buildings. They can see far away. In my study over 60 of these near-death experiencers later went back and independently attempted to verify what they saw in the out-of-body state. Every single one of these over 60 near-death experiencers that reported checking or verifying their own observations found that they were absolutely correct in every detail.”, Dr. Long said.

While some near-death experience researchers have been reluctant to make the leap from NDEs to proof of the afterlife, Dr. Long is convinced by his research findings, “I’ve gone over every skeptic argument I can get my hands on. At the end of the day, I have no doubt in my mind near-death experience is for real. It’s a profound and reassuring message that we all have an afterlife. Every single one of us. And it’s wonderful. It is probably the greatest thrill of my life to be able to carry forward that important message to the world. I wouldn’t do it if I weren’t absolutely convinced that it’s correct.” The conclusions of this research will be controversial, but Dr. Long stands ready to take on the critics, “I would be delighted to debate any near-death experience skeptic, any time, any place, on any media, as long as they’re scholarly, well informed, and as long as it can be a very high-level, intellectual debate.”

Jeffrey Long, M.D., is a physician practicing the specialty of radiation oncology (use of radiation to treat cancer) in Houma, Louisiana. Dr. Long has served on the Board of Directors of IANDS (International Association for Near-Death Studies), and is actively involved in NDE research. His book, *Evidence of the Afterlife* (HarperCollins), was published in 2010.

From Dr. Long's website: [Does Near-Death Experience \(NDE\) Evidence Prove an Afterlife? Consider the Evidence, and Determine YOUR Answer!](#)

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**Alex Tsakiris:** Welcome to Skeptiko, where we explore controversial science with leading researchers, thinkers, and their critics. I'm your host, Alex Tsakiris, and on today's show I have an interview with Dr. Jeff Long, author of, *Evidence of the Afterlife*. As you'll hear, Dr. Long is probably one of the most qualified near-death experience researchers. He's just compiled a huge body of that research into this book. This guy delivers the goods. I had a chance to interview him a few months ago for the documentary film that I've told some of you about that we're putting together. He's on top of his game. A medical doctor, well qualified in the field of medicine; also a very accomplished researcher.

I think you'll really enjoy this. I think if you like the kind of hard-nosed debate that really gets down to the issues, really gets down to the research, then you're really going to enjoy this dialogue. We talked directly about some of the points that were made by Dr. Kevin Nelson in the last episode of Skeptiko. I think you'll be interested to hear what he has to say about that, but then there's a whole new line of research and thought that he brings to this issue. So let's hear from Dr. Jeffrey Long.

We're joined today by Dr. Jeff Long, who is an internationally recognized expert on near-death experiences and the author

of *Evidence of the Afterlife*. I was just chatting with Dr. Long here for a minute before we got on the phone, and he informed me that – correct me if I’m wrong – but this is now eight days after the release of the book, a New York Times Bestseller. Is that correct?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** That is correct.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Well, how exciting. Welcome to the show, Dr. Jeff Long.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** It’s good to be here. Thanks for the opportunity.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Dr. Long, fill people in real quickly, a quick sketch, of your bio, your background, both as a physician and as someone who’s become quite a well-known near-death experience researcher.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Sure. I’m a physician practicing the medical specialty of radiation oncology, which is the use of radiation to treat cancer. I’m practicing at a premier cancer center in small town, Houma, Louisiana. I started my near-death experience research about ten years ago when I set up a Web site devoted to having people that have had these exceptional experiences fill out a questionnaire and then we would post their experience on the Web site, anonymously of course, with their advanced permission, and share it with the world.

For over a decade, this was a non-profit organization. It actually cost us quite a bit of time and money to run it. Just very recently we realized we had such an extraordinary message that we absolutely were compelled to share with the world, and hence several years ago I began work on *Evidence of the Afterlife, the Science of Near-Death Experiences*.

This is by far the largest scientific study of near-death experience ever published. It has over 1,300 near-death experiences and because we’re studying so many near-death experiences, we have the ability to come to some understandings about near-death experience that we just simply couldn’t come to before with less extreme data than we have now. I might add, the near-death experiencers, not only are there so many of them, but the questionnaire they fill out, the current version, has 150 questions.

It's also a huge number of near-death experiencers studied and they're also studied in enormous depth.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. I would just interject from a prior conversation we had that the methodology that you use in collecting these surveys and analyzing the data is really quite extensive and designed to eliminate all the possible problems that come up with survey work. Just so folks know, you are not only an accomplished physician, but you know how to do research. This is a well-done research project that is recognized in terms of the methods that are used.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** That is a good point. Actually, just my medical curriculum vitae is eight pages long, so I was very meticulous in making sure that the results of this survey and the conclusions we have would be scholarly and scientifically sound, you're correct.

**Alex Tsakiris:** What I wanted to jump into, because the book, *Evidence of the Afterlife*, is a great read. A lot of people will find it very meaningful for them. But what we focused on in this show on Skeptiko is really providing a forum for controversial research — and near-death experience research is controversial for very many people — a forum for two sides to kind of square off on this.

As you know, I spoke recently to Dr. Kevin Nelson from the University of Kentucky, who is — I guess the only way to describe it — is a near-death experience skeptic, a neurologist who's offered an alternative explanation for the near-death experience.

One of the ways I thought we could jump into this dialogue and better understand where you're coming from on your near-death experience research is maybe compare and ask you to comment on some of Dr. Nelson's ideas. Would that be okay?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** That would be great. I actually helped recruit near-death experiencers for Dr. Nelson's research, so I've talked with him. I have a great deal of respect for Dr. Nelson and his scholarly approach and I encourage all scholarly study of near-death

experiences. That's very important for everybody to know. But I certainly strongly disagree with Dr. Nelson's conclusions.

Just in a nutshell, and again this is not going to fully do justice to the very extensive article Dr. Nelson published in the very prestigious journal, *Neurology*, but briefly, Dr. Nelson believes that many, if not all of the elements of near-death experience can be explained by a phenomena called REM intrusion. REM is an abbreviation for rapid eye movement.

What Dr. Nelson is proposing is that when people face a life-threatening event they have that so-called fight-or-flight response and as a result of that, the nervous system creates some type of, if you will, dream-like, unrealistic images which at the time of a life-threatening event and with borderline marginal consciousness, may ultimately be considered to be the elements of a near-death experience.

Again, I would emphasize that's a very complex, very large article he has, but that's basically the gist of it. The gist of it is that Dr. Nelson believes that we're observing near-death experiences, but people's experience can lead, to a large degree, be based on this phenomenon of REM intrusion. I just noted my research that I've done, but I'm published in the book as well as other scholarly research that precedes it. It gives a completely different picture.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Why don't you tell us real briefly the methodology that Dr. Nelson used to arrive at his conclusions, and how that compares to what you've found and the methodology used? I guess what I'm really driving at is Dr. Nelson ended up doing a survey in some respects similar to the survey work that you did, but he came at it with some different questions and obviously, came away with some different conclusions.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Sure. Dr. Kevin Nelson, working with me, we were able to recruit I believe it was approximately 55 people that had a near-death experience. As a result of that, he then did a survey. He wanted to ask the near-death experiencers that he

surveyed four questions that were focused on whether they had a prior life experience of REM intrusion.

He compared that to the responses to a comparison group of people that he recruited from his own medical department as well as from, as I understand, some other sources. When he compared the two groups he found that people that had had a near-death experience in, as I recall, several of the questions that he asked, had a statistically higher affirmative response to questions about a prior life history of REM intrusion. That is the study that underlies his conclusions.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. I don't want to bore people too much with the details of criticisms that you have of that, which I think are spelled out really well in the article that you sent me, but maybe you could give just a thumbnail sketch of some of the problems you see in the way he went about that and the conclusions that he came to.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Well, first of all, in his very own published study, 40 percent of those that had a near-death experience answered "no" to all the REM intrusion questions he asked them. That is a substantial minority. That alone brings into serious question whether you can say REM intrusion underlies all near-death experiences. I think that almost single-handedly refutes that.

Secondly, when the questions that he asked talked about visual and auditory experiences that weren't necessarily caused by REM intrusion. So the problem is near-death experiencers that have had a very unusual, remarkable experience are certainly more attuned to the possibility of encountering REM intrusions whereas other people dismiss it. For example, I personally was waking up one morning and I heard my cell phone go off. I heard it loud and clear. It rang twice in the other room. I was a little miffed that someone would call so early, so I said, "Well, I'd better get up. Maybe it's important." Got up, and the phone had not rung. I was able to check to see if anybody had actually called. Indeed, no one had.

That was an episode of REM intrusion. It was an auditory hallucination occurring at the time of awakening. Now because I

have an interest in this and I'm fascinated with the phenomena, of course I'm going to remember that the rest of my life. But you, other people that aren't interested in this kind of a topic, you'll forget about that. You won't even remember that happened a week later. So again, I think that's one of the real biases here.

In the absence of a prospective study of near-death experiencers versus non-near-death experiencers, it's really hard to argue just from differences in surveys that that's really a true difference in their prior life experience with REM intrusion. Near-death experiencers may simply be remembering it more than non-near-death experiencers. That would be entirely plausible, especially if you've had a dramatic, unearthly experience like a near-death experience.

One of the interesting concerns I had about Dr. Nelson's study is that the questions they asked just simply asked, "Have you ever had a prior life experience of REM intrusion?" Well, the problem is even for the near-death experiencers that said that they had, you don't know whether that so-called REM intrusion occurred prior to their near-death experience or whether it was actually an after effect precipitated by the near-death experience.

So that doesn't necessarily mean that they're more predisposed to have REM intrusion before their NDE than anybody else. That study really isn't designed to do that. I think that's a very, very important point, especially with near-death experiencers being much more interested in non-normal phenomena in their life after an experience like that. I think that's another major concern that I have with the Dr. Nelson study.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Let me just back up and get back into the bigger picture because what I'm hearing you say, and you did a very good job of laying out the particulars, is that there's some reason to maybe look twice at Dr. Nelson's conclusions and you've laid out some of the reasons for that.

But if we take a big step back, what really struck me in my conversation with Dr. Nelson is – I just have to say – not that here

was a colleague, a fellow near-death experience researcher who was coming to the table and saying, "Gee, let me put my shoulder behind the wheel and find out what's really going on." I mean, what he led with is this burden of proof thing. "I think the burden of proof is on the individuals who are making these extraordinary claims and the idea that consciousness is independent of the brain is a matter of faith, not of science."

He came out with some very, very strong-minded language from this kind of skeptical position that we hear so many times from neurology types and folks who are very materialistic in their view of the world and say, "This cannot happen under any circumstances." Let's deal with the burden of proof. These individuals are making extraordinary claims and the burden of proof is on them. This is a matter of faith, not of science.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Oh, I'd be glad to address that. I think the concept that consciousness can exist apart from the body, the concept that near-death experiences are real, is absolutely relative to the perspective of the scientific community and an absolutely exceptional, remarkable claim. I personally have no problem facing the scientific community and saying, "I couldn't agree more."

This is an exceptional claim that near-death experiences are real and therefore, I willingly accept the burden of proof to prove that near-death experiences are real. Here's the good news: prior scholarly research has pretty much nailed down the reality of near-death experiences, and my most recent book took all the scholarly evidence that we have available to us. We did a lot of original research and really greatly extended the information we have that indicates that near-death experiences are absolutely real.

**Alex Tsakiris:** So you that that burden of proof issue, even if you take that on in its fullest, is addressed in *Evidence of the Afterlife*?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Absolutely. No question about that. In fact, in *Evidence of the Afterlife*, we have nine lines of evidence that indicate the reality of near-death experiences and their consistent message of an afterlife. What each of these nine lines of evidence do

is carefully review all prior scholarly research on the subject and we make our contributions with our original research from the work that I've done on the subject. Then we have written it up and put it in the book. From my point of view, the scientific term is compelling, but you can put it another way.

The nine lines of evidence that I presented and an awful lot of other people believe who have read the book, consider this to be proof of the reality of near-death experiences and proof at the level of "need exceptional evidence. Dr. Long proved that." We're there. This book is a real game-changer, to be frank about it. I think this really changes the field.

I would also say that of course Dr. Nelson could not have been aware of the content of this book. It was only released January 19<sup>th</sup>, but the content of the book and some of the original research that I've done and present is really some of the strongest evidence that we have available that near-death experiences are real.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Let's explore several of those lines of evidence because one of them will be directly relevant to addressing Dr. Nelson's next point. That's how do we know that the near-death experience is really happening – in any particular case – when there is a flat EEG?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Well, let's talk about some of the best evidence the way I see it that indicates that near-death experiences are not REM intrusion. REM intrusion is rapid eye movement and that involves having visual stimuli. I think the class of near-death experiences that single-handedly refutes REM intrusion as being the cause of all near-death experiences are those that occur in the blind, including the blind from birth. There have been case reports of these near-death experiences, not a lot of them, but they certainly are there. These people that are blind, totally blind from birth, have absolutely typical near-death experiences with very complete detailed visual observations.

**Alex Tsakiris:** They never saw anything during their life, don't have any sense of color, their sense of color is based on either a sense of

smell or feeling or they use their other senses. Now they have a near-death experience and they report seeing things. Is that correct?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Absolutely. You cannot explain vision to somebody totally blind from birth in terms of their remaining four senses. It's absolutely impossible. So for them to have vision for the first time in their life, during a near-death experience, is incredible. The people that are blind, blind from birth, do not have REM intrusion. They can't. It's physiologically impossible. So the fact that they have typical near-death experiences, if you will, single-handedly refutes REM intrusion underlying all near-death experiences. At an absolute minimum, clearly there's something else going on other than REM intrusion in some near-death experiences, just based on this. REM intrusion absolutely cannot explain that.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Let me jump to another point. This has come up not only with Dr. Nelson but with other neurologist types, and that's this idea of a flat EEG. You get to the point where you say, "Okay, we have medical evidence that people were being monitored when they had cardiac arrest and they had an EEG monitoring. They had a flat EEG. They still reported a near-death experience. Do we have any evidence at all that would suggest that in any instance, ever, that their near-death experience occurred while they had a flat EEG?"

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** The best evidence that the near-death experience is occurring during the time of their cardiac arrest comes from the out-of-body experiences that about 45 percent of the near-death experiencers report.

Let me back up a minute. When you have a cardiac arrest, which means your heart stops, immediately blood stops flowing to the brain. Unconsciousness occurs within seconds and within about 10 to 20 seconds of people that have a cardiac arrest, the EEG electroencephalogram or measurement of brain electrical activity, goes absolutely flat. During that period in time, it is impossible to have an organized, conscious experience.

However, that's the time when near-death experiencers have it. How do I know that? Well, that's easy. I and prior researchers have considered how realistic these out-of-body experience observations are. There's no question when people have a near-death experience. What they're reporting is occurring at the time when there are frantic resuscitations ongoing; it's very typical that they return to their body after they've been defibrillated or the paddles have been placed and shocked, if you will in the vernacular. Certainly they're actually observing Earthly ongoing events, again about 45 percent of near-death experiencers at this time.

What I did is I looked at over 280 near-death experiences that had out-of-body observations of Earthly ongoing events. I looked for any hint that any detail of what they were reporting was unrealistic. In other words, if near-death experiences were just fragments of memory, unrealistic remembrances of a time approaching unconsciousness or returning from unconsciousness, there is no chance that the observations would have a high percent of completely accurate observations. They'd be dream-like or hallucinations.

The hallmark of what they observed in the out-of-body experience would be unreal. Is that what we observed? The answer is absolutely not. In my review of these over 280 near-death experiences, 98 percent of them were entirely realistic by my assessment of these out-of-body observations, as well as the near-death experiencer who shared it also believing that there was no error in what they saw whatsoever. At least they did not report that they had any reservations whatsoever about the accuracy of what they saw. We're talking about an overwhelmingly high percentage of people with entirely realistic observations in every detail.

In fact, these observations of Earthly ongoing events often include observations of things that would be impossible for them to be aware of with any sensory function from their physical body. Very commonly, consciousness rises above their body. They can see the tops of buildings. They can see far away. They can see outside walls.

Just about every single time a near-death experiencer reports that, their observations are absolutely correct.

In fact, of my study series of these out-of-body observations during near-death experiences, over 60 of these near-death experiencers later went back and independently attempted to verify or refute what they saw in the out-of-body state. Every single one of these over 60 near-death experiencers that reported checking or verifying their own observations found that they were absolutely correct in every detail. There's no question about that.

If there was any cause of brain dysfunction, hypoxia chemicals, REM intrusion, anything that could possibly cause brain dysfunction and create hallucinatory, illusionary experiences, none of that is happening.

I might add that there's been a prior scholarly study of over 90 near-death experiencers where they found 92 percent of the observations of these NDEs and the OBE state were accurate in every single detail. So no question about that.

What near-death experiencers see correlates to their time of cardiac arrest and it is almost uniformly accurate in every detail. That pretty much refutes the possibility that these could be illusionary fragments or unreal memories associated with REM intrusion or anything else.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. You couldn't have addressed that more directly, but I'm going to go back and hit it one more time with the exact language that Dr. Nelson used. What he said is that this is a common misconception and that cardiac arrest doesn't mean that there's no blood flow to the brain. They could be going in and out of a conscious experience.

Now, also by implication, he's suggesting that everyone who has a near-death experience is going through that state of having some blood flow and going in and out of consciousness. That would have to be part of his assumption, because obviously in this case, if there's any one particular case where there's zero blood flow, where

there's a complete flat EEG, no gag reflex, none of that. One case kind of opens the whole door here. Let's just nail that completely.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Let's start with nailing that down first. I've got a lot to say to that. In addition to my study and another retrospective study that I addressed about how realistic out-of-body observations were, there have been two separate prospective studies that have been done of people that have had cardiac arrest. Then these researchers studied the entire group. Some had near-death experiences and some don't.

Both groups were asked to describe their resuscitation efforts. Those that had near-death experiences and those that observed their own resuscitation efforts were incredibly accurate, typically down to even very, very fine, minute details. If they had a near-death experience and saw their own resuscitation. On the other hand, the control group, that being those that had a cardiac arrest and did not have a near-death experience, their recount of their out-of-body observations were generally highly inaccurate.

So we actually have two separate studies, both of which pointing to the fact that it is the near-death experience. It is that experience that allows accurate out-of-body observations. That pretty much excludes the possibility that it's this drifting in and out of consciousness or anything else. No doubt about it. What people see during a near-death experience, both by large retrospective studies and prospective studies are verified as accurate.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I think anyone who bothers to really dig into your book, *Evidence of the Afterlife*, is going to get a really good sense of that. Let me back up then for a minute and hit another point that you touch on in the article that you wrote for the *Journal of Near-Death Experience*, addressing Dr. Nelson's points. And that's this: why do you think the scientific community is so welcoming of these alternative explanations for the near-death experience, even when we analyze them carefully, they're on some pretty shaky ground relative to the larger body of near-death experience scholarly work

that we have, including yours and other near-death experience researchers?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** That's a good question. First of all, as an overview, there's certainly a lot of other explanations for near-death experiences other than REM intrusion. In fact, skeptics of the near-death experience have proposed over 20 – that's right, over 20 – different alternative explanations for near-death experience that span the spectrum of physiologic so-called causes, psychological, sociological, culturally-determined causes.

The reason that there's so many of these alternative "explanations" out there is that these skeptical explanations of near-death experience, no one or several of them make sense even to the skeptics. I think that's an important point. I mean, certainly the skeptics can't really point to any one or several explanations and say, "Aha! This must be it because the evidence is so solid." Even the skeptics themselves realize that there's a huge number of different explanations because they can't agree on what really makes sense. That's a really important point if you look at skeptical arguments. There's a lot of them.

So the question is – and an important question you raise – why isn't there more scientific acceptance of these hundreds of scholarly articles that have been written about near-death experience? I might add these are in some of the world's most prestigious medical journals. That's absolutely a fact.

I think that one of the biggest issues is that the concept that consciousness can exist apart from the body is radically different from any other concept that the conventional scientific community has. As we've said before, especially to the scientific community, these types of exceptional claims, that being the reality of near-death experience, really does require some exceptional evidence. I think the concept that near-death experiences are real and consciousness can exist apart from the body is such a radical concept for scientists that it's very, very hard for them to accept that. In fact, I think it's such a shift from the way they've been

taught and the research that they do, that in general it's hard for them to even get interested in studying in-depth the scholarly literature that underlies the concept that near-death experiences are real.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I think they're afraid how far down the bunny hole they're going to fall and what it's going to do to the mountains and mountains of work they've accumulated in their career. I mean, folks say that directly. What would that do to my career?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** That would be a real issue. I think probably more commonly the issue is that they just simply can't believe it. I mean, if it's so outside of their life experience and if it's something that is not a part of their prior belief system, in general people on just about anything will seize on any kind of evidence or line of thinking to negate or not be interested in anything that challenges their belief system. I think that's just a naturally human response and scientists are no different.

Of course, the people who have had a near-death experience, essentially 100 percent of them come back being very convinced of its reality. The interesting thing is that includes near-death experiencers that were scientists and physicians themselves. If they ever doubted near-death experience before, once they have one they come back, grow to understand it, they accept the reality of near-death experience. Again, there's no substitute for personal experience and if you haven't had a personal experience with an NDE, then it's just very, very difficult to accept that such a remarkable experience is real.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Absolutely. Dr. Long, I think you wanted to mention one other line of evidence that you think really comes into play prominently.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** I have nine lines of evidence. I think any one or several are certainly very convincing to a lot of people. I think another line of evidence that really refutes the possibility that REM intrusion or any functioning of the physical brain whatsoever has

anything to do with near-death experiences are those near-death experiences that occur while the person is under general anesthesia. The only explanation for a conscious experience while under general anesthesia is that you're not under general anesthesia; that you have partial awakening. That's very, very rare. No more than two or three in 1,000 anesthetics have any of that. I don't want to frighten anybody about...

**Alex Tsakiris:** Hey, let me stop you there, Dr. Long, because the first time that we talked a few months ago, it really came as somewhat of a surprise to me – not for other folks – but for me, I didn't really realize how deep anesthesia is. So for the common layperson like me, tell us a little bit about what being under anesthesia really means.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** For those that have had a personal experience with anesthesia, you know you go to sleep, you wake up, and your time under general anesthesia is a totally blank slate. I've given anesthesia, even when I was a medical student, and I've been there with lots of patients that had general anesthesia.

Usually when you're under general anesthesia you're under so deep that there's absolutely no possibility of a conscious experience. Once again, electroencephalogram measurements – a measurement of brain electrical activity – under general anesthesia show complete disorganization. Once again, proof that there's no possibility of a conscious experience under adequate general anesthesia. In fact, very often people are so deep asleep that they have to be artificially ventilated, which means there's machines that breathe for them because if you didn't, they're so deep under general anesthesia they'd die due to lack of breathing. That's how profoundly unconscious people are while under general anesthesia.

Yet this is the time that people have near-death experiences. In my research, we had a population of 23 near-death experiences that to me were quite convincing that occurred under general anesthesia. I compared 33 near-death experience elements of these people under general anesthesia with all other near-death experiences occurring

under all other circumstances. In comparing those 33 elements statistically between the two groups, for 32 of the 33 elements there was absolutely no statistical difference at all between the two groups.

In other words, these people are having essentially identical near-death experience content, whether they're under general anesthesia or not. This has been observed by other researchers as well. There's multiple, multiple other near-death experience reports that occur under general anesthesia. I would argue that if you had even a single established proven near-death experience under general surgery that that would prove it. But there's actually dozens out there that have been reported, including in my own study. The fact that the content is absolutely the same as all other near-death experiences, once again almost single-handedly refutes that these experiences are due to any possible physical brain function.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. That is very convincing, very convincing evidence. So then, real quickly Dr. Long, what is coming up for you in the near future?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Well, certainly we're going to continue to spread the word about my book, *Evidence of the Afterlife*, now that it's a New York Times Bestseller. I'm sure there's going to be a lot of interest and certainly we'll be involved in a number of media presentations.

Alex, I sure appreciate your interest. A lot of people have a lot of interest in this book so far, and that's exciting to me since it's my first book and I really worked very hard to make sure that it was scholarly and factual.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I'm sorry, but you've also hit some very big outlets. You were on the Today Show. What are some of the other...?

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Oh, yes, Coast to Coast AM. I think we've got at least several more TV shows going up in the near future. Probably more and more media contacts and media involvement is probably going to happen within the next few weeks. I just found out I was a New York Times Bestseller yesterday afternoon, so that's certainly

going to open some doors in terms of some other media presentations.

I think in wrapping it up, I think I'd like to talk about the overall way in which we determine the reality of near-death experiences. There are certainly going to be the skeptics and there's certainly going to be those that firmly believe that near-death experiences are real and evidence of the afterlife, such as myself.

When Kevin Nelson wrote his article, we wrote a very careful response to the evidence exactly as he presented it. In fact, we sent that article to Kevin Nelson prior to publishing it and made it very clear that if he had any response to that we would be very interested and I'm sure we would publish it. We heard no such response from Kevin Nelson. Now I have the book out, we have all the evidence for the reality of near-death experience.

I think if we're going to as a society and scientific community, a variety of people with a lot of opinions on this both for and against; if we're really going to nail down the reality of near-death experiences, both the skeptics and the proponents of the reality of near-death experience need to have the courtesy of responding to the evidence as presented on the other side. Not what we wish the evidence was, but we really need to have that scholarly in-depth understanding of what the other side is presenting.

We tried to do that with Kevin Nelson and unfortunately, we haven't heard back a direct response from that article that we published in the *Journal of Near-Death Studies*. I would hope that Kevin Nelson or any other skeptic would do me the courtesy of carefully reviewing the evidence in my book, as well as the, if you will, the synopsis of all scholarly research, both pro and con, that I present in my book, along with my nine lines of evidence for the reality of near-death experience.

I would hope that we would have the courtesy and frankly, the integrity to respond directly to what the evidence of near-death experience is based on scholarly studies. If we simply hang to a belief system; if we're not willing to address the evidence, whether

for or against near-death experience, we're really not doing anybody a favor. We're really not advancing the scholarly understanding of near-death experience.

**Alex Tsakiris:** That's very well said. You know, really pulling that apart, it's basic science. I mean, that is the definition of science.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** Yes. I think true science involves addressing the evidence. In fact, a basic scientific principle is that which is real is consistently observed. I have over 1,300 near-death experiences in my research database. There's no question that that is a consistent observation. You cannot use the term, "anecdote" when you talk about a research database that's that great.

Moreover, basically all of my major points for evidence for the reality of near-death experience is very nicely corroborated by prior large scholarly study of near-death experience. Not only the depth of my own research, but the consistent observation of other researchers with different study groups finding the exact same thing, creates the body of evidence that I would hope that skeptics would have the courtesy, if not the integrity, to respond to directly instead of responding to something other than that real database, that real set of knowledge that we have about near-death experiences.

I think for the readers of my book, for the readers that really read in-depth both pro and con, the evidence for near-death experience, I think the light will come shining through for what the reality really is in all this, and that is without a shadow of a doubt, near-death experiences are real.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Dr. Long, best of luck with this important work.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** I sure appreciate that, Alex. This has been a real pleasure. Good luck. I sure appreciate your willingness to have a dialogue between proponents and skeptics of near-death experience. You're doing a tremendous public service. The more people know about the argument both for and against, I think the better off we are.

Alex, one other thing I might leave you with. Certainly the arguments put for and against near-death experience can be

somewhat complex and it's hard for people to understand how powerful it is when you have multiple lines of evidence for the reality of NDE. One thing I've done to help people sort out how strongly they believe in the reality of NDE is actually on my Web site. If you go to [www.nderf.org/afterlife](http://www.nderf.org/afterlife), you can see the nine lines of evidence briefly summarized in my book. People can decide for themselves how convincing each line of evidence is for the reality of near-death experience and its consistent message of an afterlife. Then when you hit the calculate button at the bottom, you can see what that combination of evidence and exactly how strongly each individual believes how strong that evidence is. Each person can calculate for themselves how strongly they believe in the reality of near-death experience from that calculation engine.

**Alex Tsakiris:** That sounds fascinating. I haven't seen that myself, so I'm going to go there and we'll definitely point all our listeners there with a link in the show notes. Thanks again so much for joining us.

**Dr. Jeffrey Long:** It's been a pleasure, Alex. Have a great day, and thank you all listeners.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Thanks again to Dr. Long for joining me today on Skeptiko. If you'd like more information on Dr. Long's book, a link to the assessment that he talked about, please visit the Skeptiko Web site. It's at [www.skeptiko.com](http://www.skeptiko.com). There you'll also find links to all our previous shows, a bunch of links where you can connect with me. I really enjoy hearing from you on Facebook, on Twitter, or dropping me an e-mail. You'll also find a link to our forum where you can engage in more of a lengthy discussion on these topics.

So that'll do it for today. I have several other interesting projects that I need to update you on and interviews that are in the can just waiting to get out there. So as fast as I can, I'll get them out to you Skeptiko listeners. Take care and bye for now.