

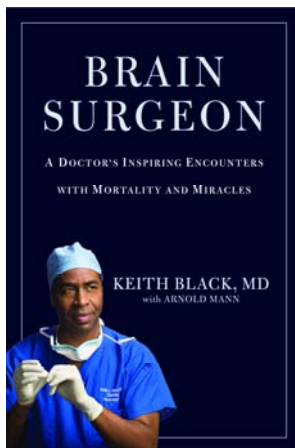


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## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### BRAIN SURGEON

*A Doctor's Inspiring Encounters with Mortality and Miracles*  
By Keith Black, M.D., with Arnold Mann



*Dr. Keith Black is Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Director of the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute, and Ruth and Lawrence Harvey Chair in Neuroscience*

Following is a list of suggested interview questions for Dr. Keith Black, author of "Brain Surgeon. These questions are provided for your convenience and are intended as idea generators only – please feel free to use any of them, or others that you prefer.

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### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE BOOK, BRAIN SURGERY AND BRAIN TUMOR TREATMENT**

1. Actor Forest Whitaker wrote the Forward in the book, and his wife – model and philanthropist Keisha Whitaker – is a member of the Brain Trust, a major fundraising group for your research. In the Foreword, Forest Whitaker talks about his grandmother having a tumor that you removed. Is that how you met the Whitakers and how they became involved in supporting your work?
2. In the book, you tell the stories of eight or nine patients you have treated for a variety of brain tumors. How did you select which patients to include?
3. How do patients respond when you tell them they have an incurable brain tumor? Do you find that people tend to become more religious or spiritual when they are told they have a brain tumor?

4. You talk a lot in the book about “Tiger Country.” What do you mean by that?
5. You say that as a brain surgeon, your goal is to be a “thief in the night.” Why is that?
6. There are only about 50 neurosurgeons in the country who specialize in brain tumors, and only a few who do a lot of brain surgeries, but there are about 3,000 neurosurgeons total. Why do so few specialize in brain tumor surgery? Are medical schools and specialty programs training new neurosurgeons to specialize in brain tumor surgery?
7. When did you complete your residency training in neurosurgery, and why do you say that most of what you learned in your residency has become obsolete?
8. Your initial work in the medical field was heading toward heart surgery and heart research. What steered your course toward the brain?
9. You consider the brain to be God’s greatest work of art. How does working on the brain affect you spiritually?
10. How do you distinguish between confidence and arrogance? How do you avoid getting the “God complex” that some doctors suffer from?
11. You say you never get nervous during surgery. How can a neurosurgeon always be calm, knowing that a minor mistake can be catastrophic for a patient? What do you do to prepare before surgery so you will be at your best?
12. What is ATJ, or anti-tumor juice? Where did that term originate?
13. You describe in the book doing an operation for a vestibular schwannoma in six hours, with very good results. You say that 26 years earlier, when you were an intern, you watched an operation for the same type of tumor that took 32 hours and the patient was neurologically devastated. Describe some of the ways surgical procedures have changed.
14. The term “malignant” is much more alarming than “benign,” but in your book you suggest there are times when a benign tumor can be as serious as a malignant one and require aggressive treatment. Why is that?

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON POSSIBLE CAUSES OF BRAIN TUMORS**

15. Is it true that you have not had a dental X-ray in 20 years? And that you don’t listen to your cell phone the way other people do?
16. The incidence of brain tumors is increasing, especially in older people and children, and in certain metropolitan areas. Do you know why?

17. Do you expect to find links between environmental factors, such as air pollution, and brain tumors?

### **ON SCIENCE, MEDICINE, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY**

18. You describe in your book several instances of “the odd observation.” What do you mean by odd observation?
19. Describe how a “failed” research project – when you were unable to reproduce the results that you had initially gotten – led to a bigger breakthrough than you could have imagined regarding the blood-brain barrier.
20. You and your colleagues have developed a dendritic cell vaccine that is being used in clinical trials to fight malignant brain tumors. How does it work, and what kind of results are you getting?
21. How is the vaccine related to the observation that younger people have stronger immune systems?
22. What are some of the other new research findings or technologies that look exciting?
23. What is a cancer stem cell and why do you think this discovery could make big changes in the way brain cancers are treated?
24. Some people with devastating illnesses try to cure themselves through lifestyle changes and alternative remedies. Surprisingly, you say that natural remedies can be beneficial, but you add that timing is important. Can you explain that?

### **RELATED TO CHILDHOOD, YOUTH, CONFRONTING RACISM, OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES**

25. When you were a little boy, you learned to anesthetize frogs and dissect them, and you tried to save the lives of injured birds. Where do you think this interest in science and nature came from, and what role did your parents play?
26. Your father was the principal of your school and your mother was a first-grade teacher. They sound like strong disciplinarians, but also very supportive of your curiosity. Talk a little bit about the chemistry set and the explosion in the kitchen when your parents weren't home.
27. You describe your father as a man who held very high standards for you and your brother and all the students at his school, yet he also encouraged civil disobedience when it came to racial segregation. Do you think it was hard for him to justify disobedience when it may have conflicted with his high moral standards?

28. Your family moved to Ohio and your father started taking graduate courses at the University of Pennsylvania when you were 10. While he was in classes, you could have been out playing, but what did you do instead?
29. You wrote a research paper at a very early age, eighth-grade. What was it about?
30. You were doing surgeries on dogs when you were in 10<sup>th</sup> grade? How did that come about?
31. Do you think kids today have the same interests and opportunities to explore nature and science?
32. How was racial prejudice different when you were young, growing up in Alabama, compared to when you moved to Cleveland and even when you went to medical school in Michigan?
33. One of the patients you talk about in the book is a wealthy entrepreneur who could afford any treatment at any cost. Most people have insurance, and the insurance companies have a lot of control over what gets authorized for payment. There are increasing numbers of people without any resources. How are decisions made regarding which patients receive which treatments?
34. You had been a faculty member at UCLA for 10 years, with an endowed chair, a research lab, federal research grants, and the opportunity to become a department head at age 39. You were being recruited by other major academic centers. But in 1997, you moved to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. What was so attractive?
35. Do you anticipate there being a single “cure” for brain tumors, or a variety of treatments that keep brain tumors at bay? What is your forecast for the next five years in brain cancer research and treatment?