Willem Johan Kolff Encyclopedia Article

Willem Johan Kolff

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Willem Johan Kolff

1911-

Dutch-American physician who is best known for inventing the artificial kidney, or dialysis machine, in Nazi-occupied Holland. His original dialysis machine was ingeniously constructed from improvised materials, including a washing machine and sausage-link casings, which served as semipermeable membranes. Improved versions of this machine have kept thousands of people with end-stage renal disease alive. Kolff has been involved in various artificial organ programs. He directed a team that invented an artificial heart.