

## OBITUARY

### Dr. Patrick Steptoe 1913–1988



Dr. Patrick Steptoe, the pioneer of in vitro fertilization, died last March at age 74.

In 1978, after a decade of research and determination, Dr. Steptoe and his associate Robert Edwards, Ph.D. celebrated the birth of Louise Brown, the first child conceived through in vitro fertilization. It was almost three years later that they received funding and were able to establish a major IVF program near Cambridge, England.

While he was medical director of the Bourn Hall Clinic, Dr. Steptoe supervised 20–25% of the successful IVF procedures performed worldwide. During the 1960s, Dr. Steptoe was influential in introducing laparoscopy to the English-speaking world. He conducted a series of laparoscopic procedures that focused the world's attention on new techniques made possible by advances in fiber optics. It was from this that Dr. Steptoe's work with IVF developed.

Drs. Edwards and Steptoe began working together regularly in 1968 and were encouraged by their results. Their studies were conducted on a part-time basis, supported mainly by Dr. Steptoe's private practice in Oldham near Manchester. In 1977 and 1978 Dr. Edwards took a sabbatical leave from Cambridge University to spend more time researching with Dr. Steptoe in Oldham.

Although he was cautious about publishing his early IVF results, Dr. Steptoe was a powerful speaker and brought IVF into the public eye. Today his work lives on at in vitro fertilization clinics around the world.

Dr. Steptoe was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and had served for several years as chairman of the British Fertility Society. He was a former president of the International Federation of Fertility Societies. Dr. Steptoe died just before he was to receive the Commander of the British Empire medal from the Queen.

Dr. Steptoe's funeral was held outside of the Bourn Hall Clinic. Among those present were nine-year-old Louise Brown and her mother Lesley Brown.

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