

PROF ROBERT EDWARDS IS PRIDE OF BRITAIN

Pioneer of IVF and founder of Bourn Hall Clinic awarded lifetime achievement

Professor Robert Edwards – known affectionately as the father of IVF - has been recognised for his Lifetime Achievement in the Pride of Britain Awards. His pioneering work with partner Patrick Steptoe led to the birth of the world's first test-tube baby Louise Brown in 1978.

Steptoe and Edwards founded the first IVF clinic at Bourn Hall Cambridge and 'babies' from the clinic were at the awards ceremony in London to help celebrate his life work.

Chief Executive of Bourn Hall, Mike Macnamee was one of the first to congratulate Professor Edwards.

"Bob Edwards is one of our greatest scientists, his inspirational work in the early 60s led to a breakthrough that has enhanced the lives of millions of people worldwide.

"Bob Edwards is held in great affection by everyone that has worked with him and was treated by him; we are delighted that his contribution has been recognised 'by the people' in this way."

"When I joined Steptoe and Edwards team in the early 1980s we were pushing back frontiers. The work at Bourn Hall in those heady days was directed at making the treatment more widely available and the patients were well aware that they too were making history. There are now 4 million IVF babies worldwide as a result of the techniques developed in Cambridge and that is a huge achievement."

Edwards, a Cambridge physiologist, and Steptoe, a gynaecologic surgeon, became famous worldwide after creating the world's first test tube baby Louise Brown. But it is clear that Edwards, who has 11 grandchildren, was never motivated by the glory of success. Edwards' main motivation was his strong desire to help infertile couples conceive. "The most important thing in life is having a child," he says. "Nothing is more special than a child."

One of Edwards' proudest moments was discovering that 1,000 IVF babies had been born at Bourn Hall since Louise Brown. He distinctly remembers the thrill of relaying this to a seriously ill Steptoe, shortly before Steptoe's death in 1988. "I'll never forget the look of joy in his eyes," said Edwards.

Prof Edwards was not well enough to travel to London so his five daughters accepted the award on his behalf from Gordon Ramsay, himself a father of IVF children.

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Notes for editors:

A biography of Robert Edwards is available at:

<http://reproduction.med.duth.gr/edwardseng.html>

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About Bourn Hall Clinic

Bourn Hall Clinic, the world's first and best known assisted conception clinic, was established in 1980 by Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edwards, the pioneers of IVF. Through innovative thinking the clinic maintains a leading role in the field.

Bourn Hall Clinic is an operating division of Bourn Hall Limited, and is located at Bourn Hall, Bourn, Cambridge, CB23 2TN, UK

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