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TO: TIME MEDICINE

FROM: LONDON

BY: WHITE

SLUG: IT'S A GIRL

TK: 2 EOH

SOME 150 PRINT AND TV NEWSPEOPLE GATHERED IN A LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM AT PRESTWICH HOSPITAL, GREATER MANCHESTER, ABOUT TEN MILES FROM OLDHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL WHERE MRS BROWN CUDDLES HER BABY. PLAINLY ELATED AND RELIEVED THAT ITS ALL OVER, SUCCESSFULLY OVER, ALTHOUGH TIRED AND SOMEWHAT NERVOUS UNDER THE HOT TV LIGHTS, STEPTOE AND EDWARDS FIELDLED QUESTIONS FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR. THEY DUCKED QUESTIONS THAT SOUGHT SPECIFICS OF THEIR PROCEDURE, SAYING THEY PLAN TO REPORT IT ALL IN THE LANCET, AND REFUSED TO SAY IF ANY OTHER TEST TUBE WOMEN ARE PREGNANT -- LEADING NEWSMEN TO SPECULATE THAT THERE ARE, INDEED, OTHERS.

STEPTOE-EDWARDS SAID THEY HAVE SIGNED NO CONTRACTS WITH ANYBODY, AND DO NOT EXPECT TO MAKE MONEY FROM THIS ACHIEVEMENT. THEY WERE IMPRESSIVE.

THE AMERICAN NETWORKS WERE THERE, PLUS NEWSMEN FROM JAPAN, FRANCE AND OTHER NATIONS.

A NUMBER OF NEWSMEN WERE NOTED HASTILY READING A COVER STORY IN AN AMERICAN NEWS MAGAZINE THAT HAD JUST HIT THE STANDS IN MANCHESTER, SEEKING BACKGROUND ON THE SUBJECT. A NATIONAL ENQUIRER MAN TAPING THE SESSION ("JUST PROTECTING OUR INVESTMENT") WRYLY COMPLIMENTED THE TIME COVER -- "IT PREEMPTED OUR STORY," HE SAID.

DO STEPTOE-EDWARDS HAVE A METHOD OTHER DOCTORS CAN FOLLOW WITH

SUCCESS? SAID STEPTOE: "THERE ARE A NUMBER OF TEAMS WHO HAVE ALREADY STARTED THIS WORK. WITHIN A FAIRLY REASONABLE TIME, GIVEN THE RIGHT FACILITIES, THIS CAN BE APPLICABLE ALL OVER THE WORLD." HOWEVER, STEPTOE SAID, "THE FINAL PROBLEMS HAVE NOT BEEN SOLVED." (YESTERDAY, IN LONDON'S ST. THOMAS' HOSPITAL, A TEAM WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING ALONG THE STEPTOE-EDWARDS LINES, IMPLANTED A WOMAN WHO ALREADY HAS TWO CHILDREN, BUT WHOSE TUBES NOW ARE BLOCKED. SHE WANTS ANOTHER CHILD. THE ST. THOMAS'S TEAM REPORTEDLY HAS SUCCEEDED IN TWO IMPLANTATIONS, BUT ONLY BRIEFLY. THE FERTILIZATION OF THE EGG APPARENTLY IS READILY DONE BY THIS TEAM. IT IS THE REIMPLANATION AND GETTING IT TO "TAKE" WHICH IS PROVING SO DIFFICULT, AS IT WAS WITH STEPTOE-EDWARDS).

ARE MORE TEST TUBE BABIES ON THE WAY? STEPTOE: "YOU HAVE TO AWAIT PUBLICATION (PRESUMABLY IN THE LANCET).... YOU'RE TRYING TO TRAP ME INTO SAYING THERE ARE MORE PREGNANCIES NOW. WE WILL PUBLISH IN THE MEDICAL PRESS IN DUE COURSE."

CAN EVERY WOMAN WITH BLOCKED TUBES BENEFIT BY THEIR TECHNIQUE? STEPTOE: "NO DOCTOR CAN GUARANTEE THAT. ALL WE CAN SAY IS THAT THERE ARE MANY PATIENTS WITH BLOCKED TUBES WHO CAN BENEFIT.... A PROPORTION (UNDERLINED) OF PATIENTS CAN HAVE THIS TREATMENT..... GIVEN THE STEADY WORK GOING ON IN THIS FIELD, ONE CAN SEE A GRADUALLY INCREASING NUMBER OF PREGNANCIES FROM THESE METHODS."

WHAT DOES STEPTOE THINK OF CERTAIN CLAIMS THAT TEST TUBE BABIES ALREADY HAD BEEN BORN, BEFORE BABY BROWN? STEPTOE: "I KNOW OF NO AUTHENTIC CASE OF A BABY BORN BY THESE METHODS."

EDWARDS SAID "THERE ARE A GREAT MANY PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED.... WE'VE BEEN SOLVING THEM ONE BY ONE. THIS (BABY BROWN) IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE SOLVED ALL THE PROBLEMS AT ONCE."

WHEN WILL THEY PUBLISH? "FAIRLY SOON," SAID STEPTOE. "BUT WE EXPECT TO HAVE A HOLIDAY FIRST." MEDICAL SOURCES SAY THEY WOULDN'T

EXPECT IT IN UNDER THREE TO FOUR MONTHS, MAYBE CONSIDERABLY LONGER. ETHICS OF PRODUCING TEST TUBE BABIES? STEPTOE: "WHEN A COUPLE COMES TO THEM (DOCTORS), ITS THE DOCTORS' DUTY TO TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM" HOWEVER, HE SAID "NO DOCTOR WOULD ETHICALLY TRANSFER TO ANOTHER WOMAN AS A SURROGATE MOTHER."

POSSIBLE FOR MRS BROWN TO HAVE A SECOND CHILD BY THE SAME METHOD? STEPTOE: THAT WOULD BE "A PRIVATE MATTER" FOR MRS BROWN. BUT, "YES, IT'S MEDICALLY POSSIBLE."

STEPTOE REPORTED A MOVIE HAD BEEN MADE "OF THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF THE DELIVERY. THIS FILM WAS MADE WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PARENTS." (THE FILM WAS MADE BY TECHNICIANS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION, FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH. A ROW BLEW UP BRIEFLY OVER THE FILM BECAUSE APPARENTLY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE LIKED TO RELEASE IT RIGHT AWAY, WHEREAS MRS BROWN'S LAWYER SAYS SHE ONLY GAVE PERMISSION UPON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WOULD NOT BE RELEASED FOR 28 DAYS. ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS, OF COURSE, IS BEHIND MRS BROWN'S OBJECTIONS -- THEY DON'T WANT ANYTHING RELEASED FOR TV UNTIL THEY'VE MILKED THE STORY DRY. IN RETURN FOR THEIR PAYMENT TO THE BROWNS. IT APPEARS TODAY AS IF MRS BROWN'S OBJECTION WILL STAND, AND THE FILM WILL NOT BE RELEASED FOR 28 DAYS FROM THE BIRTH. THE FILM WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATING THE BEHAVIOR OF THE BABY AT BIRTH AND TO PROVIDE AN HISTORICAL AND MEDICAL RECORD). EDWARDS SAID: "I'D HOPE THAT IF THIS (FILM) IS EVER USED COMMERCIALY, (THE PROCEEDS) SHOULD BE USED FOR THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE, PREFERABLY IN THE MANCHESTER REGION."

STEPTOE SAID HE HOPES THAT IN "A REASONABLE NUMBER OF YEARS, INSTEAD OF THIS (TEST TUBE BABIES) BEING A ONE-DAY WONDER OR A SEVEN-DAY WONDER, IT'LL BE A REASONABLY COMMONPLACE AFFAIR."

CAN THE BABY HAVE A NORMAL LIFE? EDWARDS: "IT DEPENDS LARGELY ON YOU (PRESS)." HE DEPLORED PRESS "HARRASSMENT" OF THE BROWNS, SAID

THAT'S WHY HE AND STEPTOE URGED THAT THE BROWNS SIGN WITH ONE OUTFIT (IT TURNED OUT TO BE ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS) IN ORDER TO GET ALL OTHERS OFF THE BROWNS' BACK.

EDWARDS SAID HE HOPED THE PRESS WOULD NOW LEAVE THE BROWNS ALONE. AT THIS STAGE, A DOCTOR WHO WAS ACTING AS CHAIRMAN FOR THE NEWS CONFERENCE, SPOKE UP AND SAID THAT "WORRY AND HARRASSMENT" HAS BEEN KNOWN TO BRING ON TOXEMIA IN PREGNANCY, AND SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY MRS BROWN'S PROBLEM MIGHT HAVE STEMMED FROM THAT. EDWARDS AND STEPTOE NODDED AGREEMENT.

IS IT POSSIBLE MRS BROWN'S PREGNANCY MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF NORMAL INTERCOURSE? STEPTOE WAS WAITING EAGERLY FOR THAT ONE. HE SAID MRS BROWN WAS EXAMINED IN BRISTOL IN THE LATE 1960S AND FOUND TO HAVE BLOCKED TUBES. SHE HAD AN OPERATION IN BRISTOL TO TRY TO UNBLOCK THEM IN 1970. THEN SHE ATTENDED A FERTILITY CLINIC IN BRISTOL. NO GOOD. SHE WAS REFERRED TO STEPTOE IN 1976. STEPTOE SAID HE CARRIED OUT A LAPAROSCOPY AND FOUND "THERE WERE MERE REMNANTS OF HER TUBES" AND THEY WERE IN THE WAY OF GETTING TO HER EGGS. EITHER THEN, OR LATER -- WE'RE NOT QUITE SURE -- STEPTOE "REMOVED THE REMNANTS OF HER TUBES," DURING THE CAESARIAN "I WAS ABLE TO SHOW THAT THE TUBES WERE ABSENT." PRESUMABLY, HE WAS ABLE TO SHOW THE CAMERAS, TOO.

EDWARDS SAID "I THINK THE FUTURE OF THIS WORK MAY INCLUDE THE REVERSAL OF STERILIZATION." HE DIDN'T ELABORATE.

STEPTOE SAID THEIR WORK AT DR. KERSHAW'S COTTAGE HOSPITAL IN OLDHAM WAS ENDING. FACILITIES THERE WERE "INADQUATE FOR THE EXPANSION WE NEED. I'VE NO IDEA WHERE WE WILL WORK. WE HOPE IT WILL BE IN CAMBRIDGE." (SEVERAL TIMES, STEPTOE SPOKE OF THEIR HOPE THAT FUTURE WORK MIGHT BE DONE IN CAMBRIDGE. SOUNDS LIKE HE AND EDWARDS HOPE FOR AN INVITATION FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, OR OFFER

FROM SOMEBODY OF EXPANDED, MODERN FACILITIES IN CAMBRIDGE).

COULD TWINS BE PRODUCED BY THE TEST TUBE METHOD? EDWARDS SAID YES, TWINS COULD BE PRODUCED BY GETTING TWO EGGS.

STEPTOE-EDWARDS REFUSED TO SAY HOW MANY ATTEMPTS THEY'VE MADE TO FERTILIZE EGGS, OR TO REIMPLANT THEM. EDWARDS SAID: "I SIMPLY CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED. QUITE A FEW..... WE HAVE ONE TREATMENT THAT WAS PROVED TO WORK."

SAID EDWARDS: "WE'RE AT THE END OF THE BEGINNING... NOT THE BEGINNING OF THE END." HE SAID THEY NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE UTERUS. IT'S THE REIMPLANTING THAT'S THE PROBLEM. "WE WILL PUBLISH ALL THESE DETAILS WHEN WE'VE HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT."

STEPTOE SAID "OBVIOUSLY, THIS (PROCEDURE) IS NOT AVAILABLE TO EVERYBODY. WE JUST HAVEN'T GOT THE FACILITIES — IT'S TOO SMALL." HE'S WORRIED THAT THOUSANDS OF WOMEN WILL NOW DESCEND UPON THEM. (INDEED, OLDHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL REPORTS SCORES OF CALLS, SOME FROM THE U.S. AND GERMANY, COMING IN FROM WOMEN WHO WANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROCEDURE, AND HOW DO THEY GO ABOUT SIGNING UP FOR IT?)

A FRENCH WOMAN REPORTER ASKED IF THERE WOULD NOW BE "ARTIFICIAL WOMBS TO CARRY BABIES?" STEPTOE: "IT SEEMS TO BE POINTLESS TO CARRY BABIES OUTSIDE THE WOMB. THE WOMB IS THE BEST INCUBATOR."

EDWARDS SAID THE LAST TIME HE SAW BABY BROWN, BEFORE HER BIRTH, WAS AS "A BEAUTIFUL EIGHT-CELLED EMBRYO." THAT WAS AFTER TWO TO THREE DAYS, TO THE BEST OF HIS RECOLLECTION. ASKED IF THAT WAS WHEN SHE WAS REIMPLANTED, HE SAID YES. TO OUR RECOLLECTION, THAT'S CONSIDERABLY EARLIER THAN PREVIOUS SPECULATION ABOUT THE LENGTH OF TIME BEFORE THE REIMPLANT

THE SEX OF THE BABY WAS KNOWN AT THE TIME THE AMNIOTIC FLUID WAS TESTED TO SEE IF THE BABY WAS NORMAL.

PLAYING GOD? SAID STEPTOE: "WE ARE NOT CREATING LIFE. WE ARE JUST TRYING TO HELP NATURE. I CANNOT SEE THAT THERE IS ANYTHING

IMMORAL IN DOING THIS. " "

WHAT ABOUT THE ARGUMENT THAT "A WOMAN IS INFERTILE BECAUSE THAT IS HER DESTINY?" A NEWSMAN ASKED. SAID EDWARDS: "WE ARE AWARE THAT SOME RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WILL NOT COUNTENANCE CONTRACEPTION OR ABORTION. WE DON'T IMPOSE OUR WILL ON ANYBODY. PEOPLE WHO COME TO US MUST SATISFY THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE. " "

STEPTOE SAID "WE WILL NOT PUBLISH THE NUMBER OF IMPLANTATIONS OR PREGNANCIES UNTIL WE ARE READY TO DO IT. " "

REGARDING THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME FOR THE OPERATION TO REMOVE THE EGG, EDWARDS SAID "ONCE THE PATIENT IS IN POSITION, THE OPERATION TOOK 85 SECONDS. " THAT WAS A RECORD. "SOME ARE QUICK AND EASY. SOME TAKE TWO MINUTES. SOME TAKE 20 MINUTES. " "

STEPTOE COMPLIMENTED EDWARDS AS "VERY SKILLFUL" IN RECOGNIZING A GOOD EGG THAT CAN BE REMOVED. "IT'LL BE OUTSIDE IN TWO MINUTES. " THEN IT REMAINS OUTSIDE FOR TWO TO THREE DAYS.

EDWARDS SAID: "WE HAVE A LOT TO LEARN. IT'S SLOW WORK. WE ARE TESTING AND ADAPTING ALL THE TIME. " "

OLDER WOMEN? EDWARDS: "THERE'S NO REASON NOT TO TRY WITH OLDER PATIENTS, ALTHOUGH THEIR FERTILITY DOES DECLINE. IF YOU GET TO 40 AND OVER THE SUCCESS RATE " IS LOWER

SAID EDWARDS, A PROTOTYPE SCIENTIST WHO SPEAKS QUIETLY AND PRECISELY, WEARS SANDALS AND HIS DARK HAIR LONG ON HIS COLLAR. "WE WISH TO BE VERY MODEST ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE DONE. "

WHAT CONTINUING TESTS WILL HAVE TO BE DONE ON BABY BROWN? HOW DO THEY KNOW SHE IS NORMAL? "THERE ARE CERTAIN MORE COMPLICATED TESTS THAT HAVE TO BE DONE, " BUT AS OF THIS MOMENT "THE CHILD IS HEALTHY BY ALL TESTS, " AND NO REASON TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE, SAYS STEPTOE.

IN A TV INTERVIEW, EDWARDS SAID: "WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT WHY THE UTERUS ACCEPTS OR DOESN'T ACCEPT THE EMBRYO... WE MUST INCREASE THE FACILITIES AND WORK MUCH HARDER." STEPTOE SAID THEIR PROCEDURE IS "A REASONABLE HOPE FOR MANY WOMEN WHO CANNOT HAVE BABIES." TIMING IS IMPORTANT -- "TO GET THE EGG JUST BEFORE OVULATION." SAID EDWARDS: "THE LAST STEP, THE REIMPLANTATION OF THE EMBRYO, IS THE ONE WE HAVE TO WORK ON FURTHER."

THE IMPLANTATION OF MRS BROWN WORKED THE FIRST TIME IT WAS TRIED ON HER. SAID STEPTOE: "THE BEAUTY OF THIS THING IS THAT IT CAN BE REPEATED TWO MONTHS LATER."

IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS SIGNED A POUNDS 300,000 CONTRACT WITH THE BROWNS, BUT THIS SUM HAS NEVER BEEN CONFIRMED ANYWHERE. STEPTOE SAID THE CONTRACT WITH THE BROWNS WAS "FAR LESS" THAN RUMORED, PRESUMABLY MEANING FAR LESS THAN POUNDS 300,000. AS FOR STEPTOE-EDWARDS, STEPTOE SAID: "WE'RE NOT SELLING OUR STORY. WE HAVE ENTERED INTO NO CONTRACT."

STEPTOE SAID MRS BROWN AND BABY PROBABLY WOULD BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR TEN TO 12 DAYS, BUT SINCE THAT INTERVIEW IT'S BEEN SUGGESTED THE PERIOD COULD BE LESS.

END FILE.

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