



In Vitro Fertilization Comes to America: Memoir of a Medical Breakthrough

Dr Howard W Jones Jr

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The scourge of infertility defeated doctors and scientists down the ages. But since the breakthrough with in vitro fertilization (IVF) and other assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) after 1980, almost every patient who hopes to have children can be helped. This book is the amazing story of how IVF came to America. It is told by Howard W. Jones, Jr., M.D. who, with his late wife Georgeanna Jones, M.D., was the American pioneer of 'test-tube babies.' For them, it was a 'retirement job' after finishing careers at Johns Hopkins University where he was an internationally-acclaimed reproductive surgeon and Georgeanna was the first director of gynecological endocrinology. That they succeeded so well against the odds late in their careers and in the teeth of opposition from right-to-life groups depended on a number of chance opportunities and the building of a 'dream-team.' Following the lead of Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edwards (Nobel Prize, 2010) and the birth of Louise Brown in Great Britain, they achieved the first test-tube baby in the Americas - Elizabeth Carr, born in Norfolk in 1981. IVF clinics have subsequently sprouted across the globe, and now account for over 60,000 births annually in the USA, and more than five million babies have been born worldwide. The rapid social acceptance of IVF owes a great deal to these doctors, and Howard Jones, now well past his hundredth year, still inspires researchers to improve treatment options, and debates the ethics of ARTs. When IVF was still in its infancy, the Joneses were invited to join a panel at the Vatican City to advise Pope John Paul II about IVF. They were unable to persuade that pontiff, although Howard harbors a hope that Pope Francis will eventually open his arms to the new treatment. No one has been more influential than him in propelling IVF forward in the USA, and this memoir is Howard's account of how the controversial research he steered became one of the great medical victories of our time.

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