

Speech of
Prof. R.G. Edwards
at the ceremony of awarding him the Prize
12.8.1409H. - March 19, 1989

Your Royal Highness, Prince Abd Allah Ibn Abd Al-Aziz,
The Crown Prince,
Your Highnesses, the Princes
Your Eminencies & Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to accept the King Faisal International Prize for Medicine from you. I am trained in Science, and your award is a recognition of the increasing input of scientific concepts into clinical care and treatment, an input which has already revolutionised so many aspects of Medicine and promises to change even more in the coming years.

You chose infertility as a subject for this year's Prize, an affliction that strikes at an unusually large proportion of men and women as they enter their marriage years. It is a subject long neglected, even among gynaecologists, yet worthy of the most intense study because of its deeply personal nature, its disastrous effect on the happiness and future life of loving couples, and its enormous importance in determining the population size in many countries. It is a subject deeply in need of research and ideas, and curiously perhaps more so today when so much has been achieved that the expectations of infertile couples are raised as never before. Originating and sustaining the scientific and clinical research to achieve these ends will need tireless and devoted people to carry them out, such as Professor Luigi Mastroianni, honoured today with me, a longtime friend and colleague determined to apply the fruits of research to clinical practice. It needs clinicians such as Patrick Steptoe, my late medical colleague and friend, who would surely have been here with me today but for his sad death last year.

As we apply advancing technology, it must be mixed with considerable care and deep compassion for the patients and for society's standards, and such care is essential for in vitro fertilization, where the complex ethical issues involved in establishing human life must be handled with the most extreme delicacy. The challenges are immense - to improve the treatment further to raise the chances of success, to understand the weaknesses in our current treatments, and to avoid the birth of babies with genetic disorders, for we have only a very modest success in these endeavors so far. Your recognition of our work today will encourage us to persevere and improve our work, to help the immense numbers of patients who still await the conception and birth of their child.

May I also salute today, in your gracious presence, all those colleagues, doctors, scientists, technicians, students and secretaries, who have helped me unflinchingly over many years. Science and medicine will never flourish without such team work. Nor will they flourish without good teachers, and have been highly favoured with good fortune in having devoted mentors

since my earliest days in school and university. And now it is my turn, and wonderfully encouraging too, to see all those young men and women who are following in our footsteps, dedicating themselves to the pursuit and application of knowledge.

Finally, May I express my pleasure at visiting your country once again. As before, I am alternately astonished and delighted at the superb hospitals, the expanding universities and the challenging architecture. I have long known the countries of the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea since serving as a very young and impressionable officer in the British Army in Palestine, Jordan and Egypt forty five years ago. I am deeply impressed at the invigoration of Arabic teaching and medicine, all around to see. The seed of knowledge needs constant care, and I sincerely hope that a quest for new skills and new 'techniques to solve afflictions common to all mankind will open opportunities for us all to work together, Arabs and Europeans, pooling our resources and paying the greatest respect and~ sympathy to each other's cultures in our joint search for inspiration.