



## Jean Marian Purdy

Jean Purdy's journey into the field of embryology began serendipitously. In 1968, at the age of 23, she was a qualified nurse who applied for a position with Robert Edwards at the Cambridge University Physiological Laboratory. At that time, Edwards was on the verge of major breakthroughs in embryology; he had successfully cultured the human embryo, outside of a human body. He had also started collaborating with Patrick Steptoe, a gynecologist who introduced laparoscopy to the UK – a precursor to modern keyhole surgery.

### Academic excellence

Jean Purdy's co-authored 26 academic papers on IVF from 1970 to 1985 showcasing her expertise and unwavering dedication to the field. These papers, published in prestigious journals like Nature and The Lancet reflect her engagement in the fundamental research that propelled IVF into a viable reproductive technology.

### A new Chapter

Purdy's decision to join Edwards marked the beginning of a revolutionary chapter in reproductive medicine. The team, driven by the common goal of overcoming infertility due to blocked fallopian tubes, worked on developing techniques to collect eggs, fertilize them in vitro, and implant embryos.

 KNOW THE MASTER

## Jean Marian Purdy

*"Jean Purdy: A nurse's compassion and a scientist's vision, combined to give life to countless dreams in the realm of embryology."*

### The Journey to Success

The initial ART was not without its challenges, faced both scientific obstacles and ethical debates. Limited funding was a struggle and both Edwards and Steptoe had to balance their ground-breaking research with their jobs. Edwards as an academic and Steptoe as an NHS consultant. In these early and challenging days, Jean Purdy's role was indispensable. Managing the laboratory at Kershaw's Cottage Hospital, preparing culture media, and precisely recording data, she was the backbone of the laboratory operations. Her nursing background provided her with a unique view and set of skills that proved in the embryological research and patient care..

### Behind IVF's Success

Sadly Purdy passed away prematurely in 1985 at the age of 39 to malignant melanoma. However, her contributions are still evident through her involvement in over twenty papers and her pivotal role in the birth of the world's first IVF baby. The story of Jean Purdy is a tale of commitment, ingenuity and determination that has left an indelible mark on the field of medical science.



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