

Press Release
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Another First as Rotunda Hospital Successfully Performs Ireland's First In-Utero Surgery to Save the Lives of Twin Boys

Doctors at the Rotunda Hospital have successfully performed Ireland's first ever surgery within the womb to save a twin pregnancy that had run into life-threatening difficulties as a result of complications known as 'Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome' (TTTS).

About one third of all twin pregnancies are identical, and up to one quarter of these identical twins can develop Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome. This occurs when abnormal blood vessels in the placenta within the womb transfuse too much blood into one baby, while the other baby is left with too little blood. If untreated it leads to the death of both babies in nearly 100% of cases.

Margaret Kershaw, a 35 year old Irish woman in her first pregnancy, had a routine ultrasound scan at 20 weeks' gestation and was found to have twins with this much-feared complication.

The Rotunda Hospital is the only hospital in Ireland that has performed this surgery, which allows tiny surgical instruments, including lasers, to be inserted into the womb and operate on a fetus or the placenta. Margaret's medical team, Professor Fergal Malone and Dr. Carole Barry-Kinsella, offered her the opportunity to have the critical life-saving surgery. "We used a radical new approach to surgery in pregnancy, which was developed in the United States, called *fetoscopy*, in which a camera less than one-eighth of an inch thick is inserted through the pregnant mother's abdomen and into the womb," explains Professor Fergal Malone, Consultant Obstetrician at the Rotunda Hospital and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Ireland's first attempt at an entirely *in-utero* fetal procedure took place on Thursday 4th January 2007, when Margaret was only 21 weeks' gestation. She was brought to the newly equipped fetal operating theatre at the Rotunda and the special fetal surgical equipment was placed in her womb. Laser instruments were used to find the abnormal blood vessels in the babies' placenta and these blood vessels were then fixed.

According to Dr. Carole Barry-Kinsella, who delivered the babies: "Margaret tolerated the procedure well and was sent home the following day. She was followed closely over the subsequent 12 weeks and both babies thrived. At 33 weeks gestation on 28th March 2007 she went into early labour and we delivered her twins by caesarean section".

Margaret Kershaw had twin boys, named Ryan and Dylan who weighed 2.14 and 2.16 kg respectively. The boys spent two weeks in the Rotunda Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and were then discharged home in perfect condition. Now the babies are three months old and are thriving.

Commenting on the case, Dr. Michael Geary, Master of the Rotunda said: "We are delighted that the Rotunda has once again led the field with pioneering medical achievements. This radical life-saving surgery was previously only available in a handful of centres in Europe and North America, and until now Irish patients faced with this problem had to leave Ireland to undergo the surgery abroad. On behalf of everyone in the Rotunda Hospital, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the medical team involved and to wish Margaret, Derek and their boys the very best for the future."

ENDS

Editors Notes:

- Photographs of Margaret and Derek Kershaw with Ryan and Dylan are available on request
- The Rotunda is the first maternity hospital in Ireland, the first Dublin hospital and the second hospital in the country to receive the prestigious Accreditation Award from the Irish Health Services Accreditation Board.
- The Rotunda Hospital is celebrating a very important year as 2007 marks its 250th anniversary at the Parnell Square site.

For further information or to request interviews in relation to this story with Dr Michael Geary, Master of the Rotunda, Professor Fergal Malone, or Margaret Kershaw, please contact Marc Kelly, McConnells Fusion on:

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