

JAMA's Assassination-Theory Barbs Have Unforeseen Price

■ DALLAS—The AMA is ponying up to settle a suit filed by a surgeon who said *JAMA* did him wrong.

A lawyer for Dr. Charles Crenshaw and Gary Shaw, coauthors of a book on the Kennedy assassination, claimed "complete vindication." The plaintiffs will be paid "by any measure a substantial sum," said attorney D. Bradley Kizzia, but the exact amount was secret. The AMA declined to comment.

Dr. Crenshaw and Shaw said their paperback book, *JFK: Conspiracy of Silence*, fell off bestseller lists after attacks on it in *JAMA*.

Dr. Crenshaw, who was a resident surgeon at the ER where Kennedy was taken, claimed *JAMA* defamed him by recklessly questioning whether he was really there. He also alleged that *JAMA* editor George Lundberg, in trying to push the assassination events as depicted by *JAMA*, defamed him by calling the book a "sad fabrication

based on unsubstantiated allegations."

In addition to AMA and Dr. Lundberg, the pair sued Dennis Breo, then a *JAMA* writer; a conspiracy-theory critic; and the *Dallas Morning News*.

The suit springs from two articles by Breo in the May 27, 1992, *JAMA*. Dr. Lundberg said they were the first interviews given by four Dallas ER physicians and the two pathologists who did Kennedy's autopsy (though that turned out to be wrong). At an AMA press conference in New York, he and Breo heaped scorn on Dr. Crenshaw's observation that Kennedy's entrance wounds might have been from the front, contrary to what the pathologists told Breo.

The Breo articles said erroneously that Dr. Crenshaw was never mentioned in the Warren Commission report. Breo also conceded he never interviewed Dr. Crenshaw. In a sworn deposition, a *JAMA* editor said the articles had no outside peer review. —Mark Bloom

Will Poachers Make the Best Drugless Fertility Therapists?

■ SAN ANTONIO—Down under, they're hot on "poached" eggs.

This approach to IVF obviates fertility drugs, says Monash University's Dr. Alan Trounson, and could lead to much cheaper and more efficient infertility therapy. So far, though, the success rate is only 10%.

But there are eight reported pregnancies—four in Australia, including two babies already born, and four in Sweden. IVF America in Port Chester, N.Y., has begun poaching and Moni-

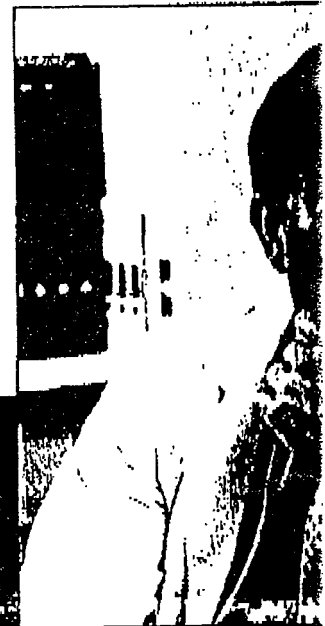
gonadotropin, and fetal-calf serum. In 48 to 54 hours, 81% of cultured oocytes matured to metaphase II and 44 of 131 that were inseminated were fertilized. And 15 of 27 with two polar bodies cleaved to eight cells or more in culture. Dr. Trounson told the American Fertility Society meeting here.

The technique costs \$200 to \$1,000 a cycle in Australia and could be 80% less than fertility-drug IVF in the U.S.

Dr. Trounson's group has two patients with ongoing pregnancies, and

Point/Counterpoint

Should cigarette taxes cover the cost of smoking-related health care?



YES This is a free country, but with freedom comes responsibility.

No one is forced to smoke. It's a personal decision.

But those who smoke should be responsible for their own risks. They shouldn't ask smokers to subsidize their habits.

Of about \$900 billion spent on health care in the U.S., I'd estimate that \$5 billion is smoking-related.

If we raise cigarette taxes to the levels set by many other civilized nations, these costs could be paid for out of a