

Hungarians welcome baby born to “brain dead” mother

BY IMRE TÉGLÁSY, PH.D., Fri Nov 22, 2013

November 21, 2013 (HLI) - In a very rare event earlier this year, a pregnant woman in Hungary who was declared “brain dead” was kept alive for three months on life support by doctors until her baby could be safely born.

The 31-year-old expectant mother suffered a stroke and was transported by a helicopter to the Neurological Clinic of Debrecen in Eastern Hungary. While the surgery was initially considered a success, sadly, she was declared brain dead two days later. An ultrasound showed that her 15-week-old preborn child was alive and very active.

“In the first two days we fought to save the mother’s life and it was proven … that circulation and functions stopped,” said Dr. Béla Fülesdi, president of the University of

Debrecen Medical and Health Science Centre. “On the second day when [other] examinations were carried out, we found the baby was alive and kicking well in its mother’s body.”

Photo taken in Debrecen, Hungary on June 1 (the Day of Life declared by the UN) when we walked to the Ob-Gyn Clinic of University of Debrecen. The text reads: Peace in the womb! Amnesty for us – amnesty for our children before birth!

Dr. Tamás Szilveszter Kovács, one of the physicians who cared for the mother and child, struggled for a time over the situation, as he was unsure whether helping a baby live when the mother died was in the best interests of the child. But after meeting with the father and grandparents he changed his mind: “They convinced me that the child would mean, paradoxically, a special surviving of the mother for the grieving father and the grandparents. So the child will be reared in a complete family, and we would commit a sin if we would not do everything we could for them that modern science makes possible.”

The father and maternal grandparents of the child together asked doctors to keep the mother alive in an effort to save the child until he could be delivered safely.

Every provision possible was taken to try to give the child the best chance possible at developing naturally and safely. The father and grandparents came three times a week from the countryside to the hospital to talk to the baby and caressed the belly of the mother. A music therapist was even employed to stimulate the baby’s healthy development.

Doctors had to fight numerous infections and, as they would with any patient who was unable to move, would rotate her in order to avoid bedsores. While they were hoping to keep the child in the womb as long as possible, in the 27th week, the mother’s circulation became unstable and so they decided to deliver the baby because the womb was no longer safe. So at 27 weeks, the baby was delivered by cesarean section in July of this year, weighing just 1.4 kilograms (3 pounds, 1.8 ounces). The Hungarian doctors who delivered the baby in July believe the birth is one of only three such cases in history, in which the mother was kept alive medically for an extended period in order to save the child in her womb.

The baby was discharged from the hospital last month but doctors wanted to wait to make the announcement about the delivery until they were sure the baby would survive.

He (the sex of the child is not known) is now developing well at home and doctors say he does not show any illnesses related to premature births although he will be continuously monitored.

The father, grandparents and medical professionals who made this extraordinary situation possible deserve the highest respect for making difficult decisions in a very trying environment.

As pro-life professor Dr. Fülesdi said, “I am happy that this team representing the unit of care and several medical experts was a community as well, which was able to pass this dramatic test of 92 days not just from the point of view of medicine but from the spiritual one as well.”

Further evidence for this kind of spiritual awakening can be seen in Hungary’s “Easter Constitution,” enacted in January 2012 as the first national post-Communist constitution. With this serious move toward national independence and sovereignty, Hungary has begun to reclaim its Christian roots, including respect for life, religious freedom, marriage and family. Its pro-life provisions do not yet have the full effect of law, but we pray that this process may be hastened, especially since Hungary continues to suffer spiritually, economically and demographically from decades of oppression and abortion.

Amidst acknowledging the heroic efforts of the family and doctors that saw to it that this small child was welcomed into life, we also mourn a mother who would not live to meet her child face to face. As tragic as this is, it bodes well for the child that so many in his young life have demonstrated such great love and care for his well-being. Let this serve as an example to all of the great harmony between being open to life, and providing the best care possible for everyone.

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