



News Release

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Retired consultant publishes book spanning the development of paediatrics in West Dorset

A retired consultant from Dorset County Hospital has published a book recording the development of children's medical services over the past half-century.

Richard Purvis, 78, and originally from East Lothian in Scotland, worked at Dorset County Hospital as a Consultant Paediatrician for 40 years, starting in 1973.

Full of fantastic photos and anecdotes, *A History of Dorchester Paediatrics*, records the dramatic development of the children's medical services at DCH and across West Dorset, highlighting the vital contributions made by working alongside fellow professionals in health, education and social services.

Dr Purvis, who was also the second Medical Director at DCH – from 1999 to 2003 – has been working for the past two years to put the book together after discussing the idea with fellow consultants.

At the Children's Centre on Damers Road last week, Dr Purvis officially launched his book and saw old colleagues come together to look back over the developments in paediatrics.

Dr Purvis said: "I saw enormous changes during my 40 years. Right at the beginning there were no special services for children. So starting from the bottom, we saw the services develop into a highly professional and well-organised system and I am so pleased to have been at the centre of that for so long.

"The first paediatrician was my former colleague David Vulliamy, who was first appointed in 1955. I joined him in 1973 and we started off with very few nurses and very few doctors.

"The first Special Care Baby Unit was in Somerleigh Court, on the old hospital site, and was one of the first in the whole country. This was a massive step."

Dr Purvis added: “When I retired about five years ago, my colleagues thought I should write about the history that I had been such a big part of.

“When I started putting together my notes to build up the picture, it was just such a pleasure – and it went on from there.”

Dr Purvis also saw the development of Henchard House on Bridport Road which was used for children with disabilities. It is now known as Trust Headquarters.

Joined by Dr Peter Johnston in 1977, Dr Purvis was able to keep the momentum going, with the development of parent support groups and employing the first Consultant Community Paediatrician, Margaret Barker, in 1985, before the Children’s Centre was opened in Damers Road in 1990.

The book will be available to buy from the Children’s Centre reception on Damers Road with profits going towards children’s charities.

Dr Purvis will be in Damers Restaurant for the day on Wednesday 24 July with his new book, for anyone who would like to grab a copy.

If anyone would like to give any feedback on the book, they can email dorchesterpaediatricshistory@yahoo.com

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PHOTOS:

Dr Richard Purvis outside the Children’s Centre on Damers Road

Dr Richard Purvis and Dr Peter Johnston outside the Children’s Centre on Damers Road

Dr Richard Purvis with ex-colleagues outside the Children’s Centre on Damers Road

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