

# **Brief History of the Renal Unit at King' College Hospital, London**

**by Barry Tomkins**

Dr Victor Parsons was responsible for the creation of a Haemodialysis service at King's College Hospital, London. It was started in the mid 1960's in a converted ward area called the "Pilot Unit", using Kolf dialysis machines, later replaced with Lucas MK 1 machines.

After much lobbying by Victor Parsons funding was secured for a new, purpose built unit to be constructed. Location was a problem as, even then, KCH was a very congested site. It was decided to locate the new unit at the nearby Dulwich Hospital, then part of the KCH group run by Camberwell Health Authority.

The new unit was to be located in the hospital grounds on the site of two existing tennis courts. This caused great consternation among the resident medical students who raised a petition to block the project.

The new unit was completed and opened in June 1968. It was quite innovative as it was one of the few purpose built units, most being converted from existing ward areas. The new unit was completely self contained and consisted of 10 treatment stations and an isolation cubicle. It had its own dedicated support team including technicians, dietitians, community nurses and social workers.

A home haemodialysis programme was quickly established to increase the capacity of the unit, and there was an active Transplant programme run by Mick Bewick. At that time chronic haemodialysis was in short supply and not available to all, particularly those in the upper age group. Victor Parrsons would have none of this and accepted many patients refused treatment at other units. This resulted in a fairly large home HD programme covering an area from Norfolk to Dorset.

To meet the ever increasing demand, the Unit was expanded to 20 treatment stations and a Transplant Outpatient Clinic was added.

Over the years home HD went out of fashion and was replaced by satellite dialysis units. KCH currently has has 5 of these units located around the South East.

The main Dulwch Unit finally closed in 2005 and moved to its current location on the main KCH site.