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IMAGES IN PAEDIATRICS.....

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William Hey (1736–1819) and child patient

Hidden from public view in many of our hospitals are works of art that reflect a rich medical and social history. From an era long before paediatrics became a specialty in its own right, there are few representations of the care of children. One exception is this painting of Leeds surgeon William Hey (1736–1819), remembered for the eponymous Hey's saw and Hey's ligament, together with his original descriptions of internal derangement of the knee.¹ Hey worked for nearly 60 years, not only as apothecary-surgeon but also as a man-midwife and "paediatrician",² describing both infantile hernia and congenital syphilis. This portrait by William Allen was commissioned in 1816 as a testimony to Hey's humanitarianism. He is shown examining a child with a fractured clavicle from the estate village of Harewood just outside Leeds. Incognito and observing the consultation is Lady Harewood, bent on testing Hey's reputation for indifference to social circumstances and class when it came to medical duty. This charming image portrays both compassion and tenderness, a fitting example to those of us caring for children today. Hey's outlook was no doubt moulded by his religious upbringing, personal experience of sickness and loss among his own children, and his desire that new discoveries in science and medicine should lessen the suffering of mankind. Hey's marked squint can be readily appreciated; it resulted from a childhood penknife injury to his right eye. However, monocular vision proved no barrier to him becoming a famous surgeon, his writings recognised throughout Europe. He maintained perfect vision in his left eye until his death from a perforated colon at the age of 83. The portrait hangs in the Boardroom of the General Infirmary at Leeds, a hospital that originated through the endeavours of its eighteenth century founders, prominent among whom was Hey himself.

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