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# Professor Alan Glasper – A Career Spanning Six Decades

**Diane Carpenter**

Alan Glasper, Professor of Nursing Studies at the University of Southampton retired in March. His career has been a full and inspirational one and this article provides an overview of his professional life and impact upon children's nursing and nurse education.

Six days shy of his seventeenth birthday in 1968, Alan began a twenty-month training programme at The Sunderland Orthopaedic and Accident Hospital leading to certification as an orthopaedic nurse, during which he spent much of his time, unsurprisingly, caring for children with orthopaedic conditions. From there enrolled at the Northallerton Friarage Hospital to complete his Registered General Nurse training where, again, he spent several allocations on children's wards

It was at Northallerton that he met his future wife, also a nursing student. Having consolidated his post qualification experience as a staff nurse working on an orthopaedic ward he applied for a studentship on the very first combined two year full time Registered Sick Children's Nurse and London University Diploma in Nursing Course at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital. He was one of only four students selected for this innovative and experimental programme which he successfully completed in February 1976.

He attributes to this experience learning the clinical skills to care for sick children and their families and the intellectual development which allowed him to begin to consider how practice could be improved and developed.

Alan had his first opportunity to apply theory to practice in challenging the role of the environment to care when, in 1977, he was appointed Great Ormond Street's first Charge Nurse and employed a mural artist to paint attractive pastel pastoral scenes, described in a newspaper article as 'Get Well Walls'.



Continuing at Great Ormond Street, his teaching career began in 1978 when he was appointed as an unqualified tutor, completing his nurse teaching registration qualification the following year at the University of London. He was quickly promoted to Senior Tutor in 1980. At the same time he started a four-year honours degree in social science recognising that graduate status was soon to become essential. Being one step ahead in this way

**Completion of Integrated RSCN/Diploma in Nursing Programme 1974**



## Get Well Walls 1977

has been a feature throughout his clinical and academic career. He ascribes his developing awareness of the psychological aspects of care to his first degree studies. His career in nurse education flourished and he became Assistant Director of Nurse Education before moving to the University of Southampton in 1984 as one of the first cohorts of lecturers in the newly inaugurated Nursing Studies Department within the Faculty of Medicine. Here he was the UK's first University lecturer in Paediatric Nursing in a combined clinical academic role.

At this time he began working with the Royal College of Nursing to promote children's nursing in Wessex. His early research activities as a feature of this appointment resulted in changing the type of uniforms Children's Nurses wore, thereby breaking down barriers to therapeutic engagement; an echo, too, of his earlier social science studies. Practical application of research to practice continued to be a feature of his work; examples of which include health promotion campaigns to encourage children to wear cycle helmets and the introduction of the Pre-admission Programme (Saturday Morning Club) within the Southampton Children's Unit upon receiving a grant of £10,000 – no small amount in 1989. Similarly, his doctoral research changed clinical practice in allowing parents into the anaesthetic room to stay with their children for the duration of the induction, a practice which remains controversial in some hospitals. This research took 5 years part time culminating in the award of PhD in January 1995.

Alan developed a national and international pro-



## Promoting Health Education 1989

file from this period and after the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu he was asked by the RCN to lead a series of charitable missions working with Health Aid Romania to help the plight of HIV infected abandoned children in the aftermath of the revolution. He led many such missions over a five year period during the early 1990s. As well as having a more strategic influence around this issue, demonstrated by his involvement in promoting children's rights with the

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Council for Romania in the mid-1990s, he maintained an important personal and humanitarian approach. At his entreaty Southampton Football Club donated their last-season's shirts to sick children in Bucharest. In 1994 he worked with Christian Indian nurses in the mountains of Oman. Further examples of his international impact include teaching as a British Commonwealth scholar in Hong Kong between 1991 and 1993 and providing conference addresses throughout the world including in Sydney, Australia in 1992 and in 1993 addressing the Australian Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital. As the 1990s progressed he was asked to make keynote conference speeches in Bucharest, Brasov, Piatra Neamţ, Florence, Rome, Genoa, Athens, Hong Kong, Brunei, Barcelona, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Muscat, Sohar, Al Ain, Toronto, Vancouver, Amsterdam, Leuven, Madrid, Brussels and Dublin. Closer to home in 1995 he assisted with the setting up of the Children's Nursing Development Unit in Southampton aimed at improving ambulatory care.

Since achieving a Florence Nightingale Scholarship Award in 1991, which he used to investigate nurse telephone triage in Toronto, Alan has also been involved in several cutting edge research projects. These include a preliminary survey of UK telephone health services (1994); evaluation of parental support interventions following discharge from a neonatal unit (with Hall et al, 1995); a randomised controlled study with George et al (1996) for British Telecom and the NHS Executive (South and West) and, in 2000, an evaluation of the Clown Doctor Initiative for the Theodora Trust. The funding awarded for these projects collectively is in excess of £718,000. His work with Baroness von Degenberg (Nursing Officer at the Department of Health) in 1993 ultimately led to the formation of NHS Direct.



**Teaching in Sydney 1992.**

Alan had already been promoted to Foundation Professor of Nursing Studies in April 1991, at which time, nationally, there were only nine Professorial Heads of University Nursing Studies Departments. This small group met annually and eventually became the Council of Deans of Health. As Head of Nursing Studies he introduced the new three year BN Honours degree, the part-time Top Up degree for Registered Nurses and subsequently the new adult, child and midwifery degrees. Circa 2000 he was involved with integrating the School of Nursing and Midwifery with the University and, during that period, also led the development of the Foundation Degree in Health Studies winning a competitive bid of £350,000. Throughout his more senior managerial and academic appointments he retained classroom contact with students. His teaching experience is considerable and his lectures memorable, but in addition he has a notable record for student research supervision and has supported a range of doctoral students throughout their studies. He has also examined 19 PhD theses at various Universities including Ireland.

Alan has a copious publication record. He has published over 300 articles in a variety of academic and professional journals including *The British Journal of Nursing*; edited 16 books some of which have been translated into Romanian, Indian and Indonesian languages and has other books currently in press including later editions of previous work. In 2007 he became Editor in Chief of *The Journal of Children's and Young People's Nursing* and, since 2012, Editor in Chief of *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing*. He also edits The University of Southampton, Faculty of Health Science's *Working Papers for the Health Sciences* e-journal.



### **The Opening of the Nightingale Building 2000**

If the profile for Professor (Edward) Alan Glasper were not already impressive, add to it his support for charities: He was a Trustee and Member of the

Board of the Tadworth Children's Trust for nine years, and was appointed educational representative of the UK Association of Chief Children's Nurses (ACCN). He currently holds advisory positions with several professional organizations which he also intends to continue with further into his retirement: he is a Specialist Advisor to the CQC, a Senior Reviewer with the NMC and works with the ACCN to promote Children's nursing.

Alan Glasper has worked tirelessly throughout his career to improve the lives of sick children throughout the world, to educate nurses and to enhance and share practice through his scholarly activity. He is an inspiration and has truly made a difference. Following his recent retirement from the University of Southampton he has been awarded an Emeritus Chair.

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### **Alan Retires After Nearly a Quarter of a Century as Professor**