What is purpose of healthcare? The word ‘healthcare’ itself implies that the two concepts it contains - health on the one hand and care on the other - are related. In order to care for someone, there is surely a sense in which we should first attend to the possibility of curing them.

At the same time, the word ‘healthcare’ is no portmanteau word. Its roots carry an implication that the two words are not quite the same. Preserving health cannot be quite the same as the concept of care. Merely curing a child’s physical illness cannot be the only way in which we can care for them. Conversely, caring for a child may do nothing to help cure their illness, but it can ease their suffering, and the suffering of those around them.

If they are not the same, then what is the relationship between restoring a child’s physical health and caring for them? Surely the starting point for healthcare should be what Schweitzer described as ‘a sense of solidarity with other human beings’. Compassion should be what motivates health carers, irrespective of whether or not it makes recovery from an illness more likely. If the only basis for palliative care is unconditional care for each individual child, then treating a child’s illness with medicines and high-tech interventions might not only be unhelpful, but positively undermining, as in focusing on the possibility of cure, we lose sight of the wider sense of care.

But is that focus on compassion itself a distraction from caring? In our efforts to focus on care rather than cure, are we losing sight of what can be achieved by modern medicine? In our compassionate efforts to spare children from unnecessary and uncomfortable medical interventions, are we failing to notice therapeutic advances in that could bring better control of symptoms, or even the hope of a cure? Are compassion and medicine two fundamentally different guiding principles that must inevitably conflict and be in tension? Or must each rely on the other, with medicine always expressing compassion and compassion always looking to medicine to see how it can help to care.

In this meeting we will explore these questions and invite participants to reflect on the concepts of care, cure, futility and compassionate care in their work with children. We invite a multi-disciplinary exploration by drawing on insights from practice and empirical research.

Dr Richard Hain
Professor Daniel Kelly

We are pleased to announce that abstract submissions are invited for oral, poster or workshop presentations. A submission form is attached to the email accompanying this document. A copy will be available on the website (details to follow) or, a copy can be emailed to you. Please email your request to PPC2015@cardiff.ac.uk

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The deadline for abstracts is 1st February 2015. Authors will be notified of acceptance or non-acceptance by email as soon as possible after this date. Note: Abstracts may appear in black and white in the book of abstracts. 

Enquiries regarding abstract content to Richard Hain via - Linda Baker: linda.baker@wales.nhs.uk or, Daniel Kelly via - Sofia Vougioukalou: VougioukalouS@cardiff.ac.uk

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Contributions must be presented by one of the authors, or, if none of the authors are able to attend the presentation can be made by a qualified substitute. All contributors will be required to register and pay in full.
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Further details will follow. If, in the meantime, we can help with an enquiry please contact the conference management team on: +44 (0) 29 2087 5508 or email us at PPC2015@cardiff.ac.uk

Conference Venue
The conference will be held at Cardiff University. The conference will commence on Wednesday 8th July and end Friday 10th July 2015. Further details to follow

Conference website
Details to follow

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The International Children's Palliative Care Network (ICPCN) is a "one-stop" international resource providing information about paediatric palliative care services for professionals, caregivers and families. It raises awareness of the worldwide need for children’s palliative care services, promotes research to support and underpin its information and policy work, provides free online education, undertakes face to face training and generally raises the profile of children's palliative care through focused advocacy.

The ICPCN represents the voice of children on the Worldwide Hospice and Palliative Care Alliance, an alliance of national and regional hospice and palliative care Organisations. To learn more visit the website at: www.icpcn.org

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