History of Neonatal Care

Documenting our history and the events that have influenced our practice

Pre-NICU Era

1835 – First incubator used by Von Ruehl in St. Petersburg, Russia
1852 – Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, opens and was the first hospital in England to provide in-patient beds specifically for children.
1854 – New York Nursing and Child Hospital, and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia opens. The first Children’s Hospitals in North America.
1880 – The first closed incubator is introduced in Paris
1884 – First report of gavage feedings
1889 – First use of oxygen for premature infants

1890–1940

1893 – First NICU opened at the Paris Maternité
1894 – First milk depot
1898 – First United States’ incubator slide show at world’s fair in Omaha, Nebraska
1899 – First report of a transport incubator
1908 – City of Chicago mandates pasteurization of milk
1922 – Opening of the first “premature station” at Sarah Morris Hospital, Chicago
1930 – American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) founded
1936 – First successful surgical PDA closure reported

1940–1960

1942 – First description of retrolental fibroplasia (ROP)
1948 – First Edition of “Standards and Recommendations for Hospital Care of Newborns” published by the AAP
1949 – First course on Premature Infant Care for physicians and nurses offered by Cornell
1950 – First delivery room use of Blossom Air Lock ventilator
1952 – Apgar scoring system introduced
1953 – High frequency ventilation described
1956 – Phototherapy established with the first realization of the action of sunlight
1958 – First thermoregulation study published by W. Silverman and colleagues
1959 – IV fluids used for neonates with RDS

1835–1890

Demand for Care Expands

The NICU Takes Shape

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