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Media Release

Hippocrates tree takes root at RUH

This spring a new and special sapling will be bursting into leaf in the grounds of Bath's Royal United Hospital – providing a direct link between modern-day medicine and its ancient beginnings.

The oriental plane tree – *Platanus orientalis var Insularis* – is said to originate from the ancient Tree of Hippocrates on the Greek island of Kos. Legend has it that, under the shade of its branches, the father of medicine taught his students and created his famous oath, still relevant to the profession's code of ethics, some 2,500 years ago.

It's been given to the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust by retired consultant physician Dr Peter Bennett, who worked at the RUH from 1976-2004 and who still lives in the city.

He said: "I thought it would be interesting to try to grow a descendant of the Hippocrates tree. I was given some seed from the plane tree in the courtyard garden of the Royal College of Physicians in Regents Park – itself a descendant of the present Kos tree – and managed to grow it to this size. I hope it'll be an attractive feature and a talking point at the hospital for years to come – and perhaps produce more seed and more Hippocrates trees itself."

The young plane tree has been planted between the RUH's Wolfson Centre and the Dyson Centre for Neonatal Care. It has a long way to go to measure up to its Kos ancestor, which is 500 years old, has a crown diameter of around 12 metres and is said to be the largest plane tree in Europe. It is believed to be descended from the original Tree of Hippocrates from the 5th century BC and stands in the same place in the town centre.

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