Retired physicians gathering
Thursday 3 December 2020
Birmingham Conference & Events Centre
Holiday Inn Birmingham City Centre

11.30 am Registration

12.00 midday Dr Alistair Ritch
Retired consultant physician in geriatric medicine, Honorary research fellow, Former senior clinical lecturer at University of Birmingham

‘Sickness in Birmingham and Wolverhampton workhouses’

The talk will discuss the character, scope and scale of medicine practised in Birmingham and Wolverhampton workhouses from the start of the New Poor Law in 1834 until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. It has been widely assumed that the workhouse catered almost exclusively for patients with chronic diseases, but the talk will illustrate that it provided medical care for paupers with a wide range of medical conditions including acutely ill paupers admitted as emergencies. By providing isolation facilities, the workhouse played the major role in curtailing the spread of infectious diseases within its local community. The wide variety of therapies that the medical officers prescribed will be described particularly the place of alcohol therapeutics. It will conclude that the workhouse infirmary was important as the provider of medical care in the lives of the sick the poor in its own right in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and not merely as a stepping-stone in the later development of the NHS.

1.00 pm Lunch

2.30pm Close