Professor Harry Keen CBE MD FRCP (1925-2013)
Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Guy’s Hospital, London

It is with great sadness we report the passing (5th April 2013) of Professor Harry Keen, who rightly can be considered of singular pre-eminence in the Diabetes Hall of Fame. Harry Keen will be remembered by everyone working in the field of diabetes – his life-time contribution has been truly immense and exceptional. From basic scientific research to clinical innovation; from epidemiological study to defining present day classification of diabetes; from initiating one of the first diabetes centres in the UK to recognizing the importance of the multidisciplinary team working together across the spectrum of primary and secondary care: in all these domains Harry has left an unparalleled legacy of achievement that has enriched an understanding of diabetes and hugely benefited many generations of patients and professionals alike. Above all, he was a most caring clinician, an ethos central to his drive and determination to improve the lives of people living with diabetes.

Professor Keen held senior office with the British Diabetic Association, the EASD and International Diabetes Federation and he received many international accolades, including two Awards of Distinction from the American Diabetes Association for his outstanding contributions. His passionate commitment to the National Health Service was held with deep conviction. Harry Keen was founder member and President of the NHS Support Federation, with which he worked tirelessly to champion the core principles of the National Health Service.

On a personal basis, I am indebted to Harry for his kindness over many years throughout my own professional career – a mentor in earlier days and always available for advice and wise counsel. Many of us will remember his leadership over the many wonderful educational exchanges we enjoyed at various delightful European locations – the trip to Moscow remains unforgettable but Harry’s tribute to Gracie Fields at the home of Axel Munthe in Capri remains an indelible memory.

We last saw Harry at the Diabetes UK Annual Professional conference in Manchester only three weeks before his passing. We will much miss him, but he leaves much by which we will remember him. At the millennium, Harry published an open letter in Practical Diabetes International looking positively to the future of diabetes care, and this would seem a fitting tribute to the passion for diabetes that he so much imbued in all of us who had the privilege to have known him.

Ken Shaw
April 2013