

SIR MICHAEL HIRST

Short Biography

Michael Hirst's interest in diabetes started when his youngest child was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of four.

Then a Member of the UK Parliament, he could then readily see how care could be improved for those with diabetes and their carers. His 'eureka moment' came when he was asked to inject an orange with an unwieldy glass syringe, so that he could learn to inject his child; shown a disposable syringe, he could see the immediate advantages for everyone. However, families had to buy these syringes, and he felt that was discriminatory.

Campaigning for the addition of disposable syringes and blood glucose monitoring to be added to the Drug Tariff in the UK, he found strong resistance from the Treasury and Health Department. Finally, he approached Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to explain the problem and suggest solutions. Thanks to her direct intervention, money was found for not only disposable syringes, but soon after, for blood glucose monitoring.

In recognition of his ultimately successful advocacy, Diabetes UK invited him to join their Board of Trustees. In 2001, he was elected Chair of the Board of Trustees and served until early 2006. In 2005, IDF the International Diabetes Federation set up an international steering group to campaign for a United Nations Resolution on Diabetes, and he was asked to serve as deputy chair. The Resolution was finally obtained in December 2006.

In 2006, Michael was elected to the board of IDF, becoming President-Elect in 2009, and taking up the Presidency in January 2013 until December 2015. Among the initiatives commenced during that triennium, was the IDF Education Recognition Programme for Professional Education of doctors, nurses and other health professionals.

One of his particular interests as President was the formation of PDGN, the Global Network of Parliamentary Champions for Diabetes. Two successful Global Forums took place in Melbourne and Vancouver, following which PDGN became a self-standing organisation of which he is still Co-Chair.

Michael is a graduate in law, and was a partner in KPMG chartered accountants until his election to Parliament. In 1992, he was knighted for his political and public service.