

A tribute to June James



It is with great sadness but immense pride that, as Editor-in-Chief, I write a dedication to an amazing and much-missed colleague. Many of you will have known June James and will likely be aware that she sadly lost her battle with cancer in February of this year.

June's nursing career spanned an incredible five decades. Starting in Peterborough as a Staff Nurse in 1976, she soon developed a passion for diabetes management and became a Senior Diabetes Nurse Specialist by 1994. She remained a passionate advocate for diabetes care, concluding her career as Diabetes Nurse Consultant in Leicester.



Throughout her diabetes career, June worked tirelessly to promote good practice, education and learning. She deservedly received numerous awards and accolades, but the one which she was most proud to be awarded was the title of Honorary Associate Professor by the University of Leicester, in recognition of her phenomenal work. Her reputation has stood out not just across the UK but across the globe. The list of her achievements is vast, and I highlight just a few here.

Early in June's career, she developed a passion for the care of the older person and, through her influence in the diabetes community, she was an integral member of the Older Persons working party, alongside Professor Alan Sinclair, developing guidelines for diabetes care delivery in the care home community.

June worked tirelessly to promote insulin safety and, again, was a core team member in the development of many of the e-learning insulin safety modules that are still available today. As a Nurse Consultant, June's endless enthusiasm and passion for education and learning was inspiring. She taught on the diabetes Master's module for the University of Leicester.



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Memorably, alongside Professor Richard Holt, she co-Chaired the Diabetes UK Conference organising committee and was often seen dancing the night away at the annual conference dinner!

I believe the one aspect of her influence that will last longest in the history books is her role within Trend Diabetes. As a cofounder, her drive and zeal for all that Trend Diabetes stood for and sought to achieve demonstrates her endless passion to give back to the diabetes community, and to be a help and guide for all those working in the diabetes field.

To complete this tribute to June, I welcome back my friend and predecessor as Editor-in-Chief of this journal, Debbie Hicks. Debbie, more than anyone, knew June, the person behind the role, and she shares some of her favoured memories of her dear friend.

Farewell to the Matriarch of Diabetes Nursing

Debbie Hicks

In 2009, June and I shared the desire to take diabetes nursing to a different level, and TREND-UK was born and launched at Diabetes UK 2010.

During a leadership programme we ran together, we did some psychometric testing. June came up RED and I was YELLOW – exact opposites – but we got on so well because we shared the same work ethic and passion for diabetes nursing. Red traits denote assertiveness – I called her bossy!

We learnt so many non-nursing skills along the way, including business management, marketing, project management, promotional activities and more, and we had so much fun doing it. In 2019, TREND-UK became Trend Diabetes, with me and June as Directors: a two-man band!

Throughout the last fifteen years, I always had fun introducing June to audiences as “the woman dressed in black who would frequent street corners with a bunch of men asking for money”! I was of course referring to June and her Salvation Army colleagues, including the bandsmen, raising funds to help the more needy. June was very proud of her faith, and it kept her strong in the last few days of her life.

The best memories I have of June are:

- Winning awards together, of which there are quite a few still sitting in her office – she was very reluctant to share them! I think I might be able to pinch one now.
- Being a Diabetes Diva – a memorable Diabetes Professional Care session we did together a few years ago!



- Building valuable relationships with the diabetes pharmaceutical companies who support Trend Diabetes.

And, most recently, at the EASD meeting in September 2024, sitting on top of the world in the Sky Bar of the Riu Plaza Madrid, toasting the success of Trend Diabetes with piña coladas (mine with added alcohol). I remember her fondly saying,

“We did good girl, didn’t we?” Sadly, that was what she said to me in our last conversation as I hugged her. I will remember it forever.



June was a superb mentor to me and to many hundreds of others. She had many different titles during her nursing career, but the titles I gave her were the “Matriarch of Diabetes Nursing, my BBF (Bossy Best Friend) and my SS (Surrogate Sister). June was my peer, my work colleague, my business partner, my confidante – and my dresser. I have now had to find shoes that I can fasten myself and clothes that I can dress myself in, because June was always there to help me when were away!

I miss her every day, but I am grateful that for the last fifteen years she touched my life in a beautiful way.

RIP June x

