The Most Influential Scientist in the Development of Medical informatics (9): William Abbott

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WILLIAM ABBOTT (1931–2011)

William ‘Bud’ Abbott (1931–2011) was one of the pioneers of Health informatics in the United Kingdom and Europe. Abbott was one of the first generation of health informaticians in Europe. He and his colleagues at the time probably would not have used the term Health/Medical Informatics, because that term first used by Peter Leo Reichertz in Hannover in 1973. Abbott’s death brings to an end an era of health informatics that started operationally in the mid-1960s. In 1948, William Abbott joined The London hospital, became involved in the use of machine accounting and explored the use of computing towards the end of the 1950’s. He was instrumental in the development of hospital computing, and played a leading role in both global activities through the International Medical Informatics Association and closer to home with the establishment of the ‘Current Perspectives’ in Health Computing conference and exhibition in 1984 which became the ‘HC’ event which still runs today. By the early 1970s, Bud was already ‘Mr-NHS Computing’ and led many of the British Computer Society Health Informatics Specialist Groups delegations to European and world events. He encouraged work and mobilized peers and novices to work together through the professional society. He had a knack of

facilitating and fixing whilst also being a consummate diplomat. During organization of IMIA MEDINFO Conference in London in 2001, he was included there, playing a vital ‘political’ role in the Local Organizing Committee. He continued to guide health informatics even when operationally retired, frequently appearing in Harrogate at HC congresses and always willing to chair sessions, sometimes at very short notice! He was a mentor to many, especially in the UK and Europe, over the years. His professional legacy will be both the iconic London Hospital System and the position of UK health informatics world-wide.

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