

Patricia A. Keener, M.D.: In Tribute

Dr. Patricia A. Keener graduated from the Indiana University School of Medicine with Alpha Omega Alpha Honors in 1968 (one of only fifteen women in the class). Following graduation and after an internship at Wishard Hospital (now Eskenazi Health), she took a Pediatric Residency at the Medical College of South Carolina where she served as Chief Resident and received training in pre-term and seriously ill infants. She then returned to the I.U. School of Medicine as the Director of Undergraduate Education in the Department of Pediatrics. She went on to achieve board certification in neonatology, and in 1974, on loan from Riley Pediatrics, she began her 17-year service as Chief of Pediatrics at Community Hospital in Indianapolis where among other accomplishments, she established its neonatal intensive care units. In 1989, she returned to the I.U. School of Medicine and Riley Hospital and was named Director of the Section of General and Community Pediatrics where she served as a fierce advocate for the medically underserved. She worked in partnership with community leaders to improve care for underserved populations, overseeing the pediatrics program at Wishard Hospital (now Eskenazi Health) and serving as medical director of the Indianapolis Campaign for Healthy Babies, a public-private partnership that successfully addressed the infant mortality problem in Indianapolis. Among the many activities she initiated was the Super Shot Saturday program.

During her career, Dr. Keener held the titles of Professor of Pediatrics and Adjunct Professor of Philanthropic Studies. At the time of her passing, she was Assistant Dean, Emeritus, Medical Service Learning, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics, Indiana University School of Medicine, and Professor Emeritus of Philanthropic Studies, School of Liberal Arts, Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis.

Dr. Keener aided the education of young physicians and developed a cultural competency curriculum that evolved into the I.U. School of Medicine's Office of Medical Service Learning. The American Academy of Pediatrics awarded her the Ross Education Award for outstanding accomplishments in pediatric postgraduate and continuing education. Many other awards came to this outstanding medical and community leader, including the Girl's Inc. 2005 Touchstone Award, the 1991 Tony and Mary Hulman Health Achievement Award in Preventive Medicine and Public Health, and Indiana's highest honor for distinguished service, the Sagamore of the Wabash in 1992.

While at Community Hospital, an 18-month-old girl was brought to the emergency room. The little girl, the daughter of a colleague who worked as a nurse on the postpartum unit, had choked while eating breakfast, and the adult babysitter caring for her didn't know how to rescue a choking child. By the time the ambulance brought the girl to the hospital, it was too late.

The tragedy galvanized Dr. Keener into action and she founded the Safe Sitter® program, see: <https://safesitter.org/>. She drafted a curriculum to teach life skills, safety skills, and first aid and rescue skills to middle-school-aged children and taught the first class at her own children's school, then she began teaching at Community Hospital. Eventually, she trained others to teach the classes, and the program soon spread across the Midwest. With the help of a grant from the Lilly Endowment, the program went national. Today, Safe Sitter® is a national nonprofit

organization with over 900 Registered Providers in all 50 states. Safe Sitter® continues to help build safer communities by providing youth with the skills they need to be safe while home alone, watching younger siblings, or babysitting.

In 2001, the Riley Children’s Foundation sponsored Dr. Keener’s authorship of *Caring for Kids*, and facilitated statewide distribution of several hundred thousand free copies to physicians and their patients around the state. The book offered a wealth of information and tips not found in traditional parenting books and was prepared by Dr. Keener and her staff with the input from other physicians, health care professionals, and parents throughout the state. In 2009, a second edition of *Caring for Kids* was written by Dr. Abigail Klemsz and Dr. Patricia Keener, see *Caring for Kids* (2nd edition): https://www.in.gov/dcs/files/Caring_for_Kids.pdf

“Pat’s in the top 1/100th of 1 percent of people who have made a difference in the quality of life and quality of healthcare for children,” said Richard L. Schreiner, M.D., Chairman Emeritus of Department of Pediatrics at the IU School of Medicine. Dr. Schreiner credits Dr. Keener’s vision and leadership in the 1990s to convert public health clinics to primary care health centers as significantly contributing to Indianapolis today having one of the best primary care medical programs for the underserved in the nation: “Pat laid the groundwork for why the underserved in Indianapolis can now go to neighborhood based health care centers and receive convenient, quick, and affordable access to high quality medical care by appointment and from the same doctor.”

References:

Our Founder: Patricia A. Keener, M.D., Safe Sitter, available at: <https://safesitter.org/our-founder/>.

Hiring a Babysitter this Holiday Season? You may have an IU School of Medicine Alumna to thank, Indiana University School of Medicine blog: https://medicine.iu.edu/blogs/alumni/patricia_keener_safe_sitter

Sciencetech Club – Sagamore of the Wabash, Patricia A. Keener, M.D.: <https://www.sciencetechclub.org/honorrollcss.asp#Pat%20Keener>

Girls, Inc. to honor community women, *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 9, 2005, p. 5, accessed through Hoosier State Chronicles. Dr. Patricia Keener was a 2005 Touchstone Awards Honoree, Girls, Inc. of Greater Indianapolis.

Super Shot Saturdays, *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 14, 1991, p. 5: <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/cgi-bin/indiana?a=d&d=INR19910914-01.1.5&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->, accessed through Hoosier State Chronicles.

Campaign for Healthy Babies Hits the Road, *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 25, 1992, p. 34:
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=INR19920725-01.1.34&srpos=2&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-Pat+Keener----->, accessed through Hoosier State Chronicles.

Ask the Doctor (Dr. Pat Keener), *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 1, 1992, p. 4:
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=INR19920201-01.1.4&srpos=4&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-Pat+Keener----->, accessed through Hoosier State Chronicles.

“Riley Hospital publishes book, free to Hoosier families,” *IUSM Scope*, Vol. 5, Number 33, November 12, 2001, p. 243, available through IUPUI University eArchives at:
<https://archives.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/2450/55/Scope%202001.pdf?sequence=1>.

William H. Hudnut, III, *The Hudnut Years in Indianapolis, 1976-1991*, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 39, available at:
https://books.google.com/books?id=2SPihZdxEVoc&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=campaign+for+healthy+babies+late+1980s+Indianapolis+infant+mortality&source=bl&ots=go5ghRoyTw&sig=JndoJrL92A2LEjkh_KA-SAi764Q&hl=en&sa=X&ei=igfYVKWWF4SpyQTXs4GADg&ved=0CCQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=campaign%20for%20healthy%20babies%20late%201980s%20Indianapolis%20infant%20mortality&f=false

Indianapolis Healthy Babies Consortium, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, available at:
<https://indyencyclopedia.org/indianapolis-healthy-babies-consortium/>

Judith B. Erickson, *The State of the Child in Indiana* (1993), Indiana Youth Institute, go to page 188 for statistics on LBW infants at the time (1984-1990):
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED364342.pdf>