

CANADIAN
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Dr. Virginia Douglas

CPA Gold Medal Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to Canadian Psychology 2004

Dr. Douglas has been a pioneer in the study of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and was among the first to make this a field of respectable scientific inquiry and to demonstrate that one could conduct meaningful research, both basic and applied, on clinical child populations. She was among the first researchers to conduct controlled drug trials and to propose behaviour modification techniques to improve problems of attention and impulsivity in children with ADHD.

For more than 25 years, Virginia Douglas has set the direction for research on children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Her classic article from the 1970s, "Stop, Look, and Listen", was the primary stimulus for the change in the name of the characteristics of the diagnostic category from an emphasis on hyperactivity to an emphasis on attention. Her influence was profound and crucial to the understanding that hyperactivity was not purely a behavioural phenomenon but that this disorder had fundamental cognitive deficits.

Dr. Douglas was a role model for women graduate students in the 1960s and 70s when there were very few women in academic positions. She was the first woman to become chair of the Psychology Department at McGill University, is a CPA past-president and has served on numerous committees at the provincial and federal levels, as well as grant review committees in the US at the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Douglas has been awarded the "Distinguished Contribution Award for Research" in clinical child psychology from the American Psychological Association's Section on Clinical Child Psychology, was the first recipient of the CPA Professional Award and was awarded the Canadian Silver Jubilee Medal.

Virginia Douglas's vigour, enthusiasm, and clarity of thinking have led research on childhood psychopathology for four decades. The research community, the clinical community, and children internationally have benefited greatly.