

Jerome Kagan: Conceptual Contributor to Pediatric Psychology

By Michael C Roberts

Jerome Kagan, PhD, has been cited as a conceptual contributor to the early development of the notions of pediatric psychology with the phrase: a "new marriage" between pediatrics and psychology in a publication in 1965. He was a developmental psychologist after receiving his BA from Rutgers University and PhD from Yale University. He made multiple distinguished contributions through academic positions at Ohio State University, the Fels Research Institute, and Harvard University with innovative research on infancy, cultural development, temperament, emotion, stress, neurobiology, among other topics. Born in 1929, he died May 10, 2021 at age 92.

Dr. Kagan has been lauded for his work in many developmental psychology areas and for inspiring and mentoring generations of developmentalists. Particularly relevant to pediatric psychology, his 1965 article in the *American Journal of Diseases of Children* has been cited for describing an early vision of "the new marriage" of collaboration between pediatrics and psychology. The article was based on his comments at the opening of the renovated Pediatric Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Roberts (1993) observed that "Kagan envisioned that this collaboration would provide pediatricians with an understanding of personality dynamics and research. He suggested that the professionals would work on many childhood problems with an emphasis on prevention, early detection, and treatment" (p. 2).

As noted by Mesibov (1984), this conceptualization was important as it emphasized the research orientation of psychologists as contributors to understanding children's problems, but may have "underestimated the clinical role of the psychologist within medical settings" (Aylward & Lee, 2017, p. 4). This emphasis is understandable because Kagan was a researcher in developmental psychology, not a clinician, and given the nascent state of psychologists as treatment providers. Nonetheless, calling attention to the value of collaboration of psychologists in a prominent medical journal at the time helped foster a greater acceptance during the earliest development of the field.

References

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