



Sula Walton (Wolff)

Sula Wolff died recently in Edinburgh. She was an international figure in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry. She was one of the founders of the modern scientific study of child psychiatry and a pioneer in its development. The clarity of her approach and her acute clinical awareness and definitive research has left an enduring mark. Most of her work was done as a researcher and clinician at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the Department of the Psychiatry in the University of Edinburgh, but her influence as a teacher and researcher spread internationally, including to the Department of Psychiatry at Groote Schuur Hospital, where she worked in the 1960s. At that time there was no speciality of child psychiatry in South Africa nor in fact any trained child psychiatrists – all this was to come many years later.



She was the first academic child psychiatrist to work in South Africa and set a model for others to follow and lead to the formation of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the University of Cape Town. Sula is best known for her work in defining the schizoid personality disorders of children, which was an important forerunner to the understanding of the complex and fascinating group of autistic conditions which range from severe autism to mild forms of Asperger's syndrome. She wrote an influential book on the subject called *Loners*.

She continued to research other areas of child psychiatric illness and published many important papers on allied subjects. Sula is remembered by all who knew her as a clear thinker and an astute clinician, but above all as a kind and thoughtful person who treasured her friendship as she herself was treasured and respected. She will always be remembered for her warmth and welcome to the many South Africans who visited her home in Edinburgh.

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