

Huda Akil, Ph.D. is the Gardner Quarton Distinguished University Professor of Neuroscience and Psychiatry and the co-Director of the Molecular & Behavioral Neuroscience Institute (MBNI) at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Akil and her colleagues have made seminal contributions to the understanding of the brain biology of emotions, including pain, stress, anxiety and substance abuse. Her current research investigates the genetic and neural mechanisms underlying addiction and mood disorders.

Among her contributions, Dr. Akil provided the first physiological evidence for a role of endorphins in the brain, and showed that endorphins are activated by stress and cause pain inhibition. Her laboratory has developed new genetic animal models of temperament and shown their relevance to human disorders, including addiction and depression.

She is a member of the Pritzker Consortium, which is engaged in large-scale studies to discover new genes and proteins that cause vulnerability to major depression and bipolar illness. Her work has uncovered the role of the Fibroblast Growth Factor (FGF) family in depression, anxiety and established its functions in the development and control of emotions.

Dr. Akil has served on several national and international organizations to promote scientific and brain health awareness nationally and globally. She is the past President of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (1998) and the past President of the Society for Neuroscience (2004) the largest neuroscience organization in the world. She has served two terms on the Council of the National Academy of Medicine and served on the National Research Council (NRC) review board.

Dr. Akil's contributions have been recognized with numerous honors and awards, including honorary doctorates. In 1994, she was elected to the membership of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM). In 2004, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2011 she was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. In 2013, she received Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Award for Distinguished Research in the Biomedical Sciences. In 2015, she was elected to the Lebanese Academy of Medicine and received the Kuwait Prize in Biomedical Research. She holds Honorary Doctoral Degrees from the University of Ottawa (2016) and from the American University of Beirut (2017) where she also was the 2017 graduate commencement speaker.