Joan L. Luby, MD, the Samuel and Mae S. Ludwig Professor in Psychiatry, is internationally recognized for her work on emotional development and mood disorders in young children and its behavioral and neural outcomes across development.

Throughout her career, Luby has tirelessly pursued the causes and earliest possible interventions for childhood mood disorders, a once controversial area of study. Luby established a groundbreaking mental health clinic for infants and young children. This clinic, which focuses on parent-child interactions as predictors of mental health outcomes, has provided superb clinical care to a generation of children and families in the region for over two decades.

The clinic has been a platform for training many groups of students, residents, and fellows on state-of-the-art early identification and care of children showing early signs and symptoms of childhood psychiatric disorders. Luby is also the lead investigator on a National Institutes of Health funded training program in developmental psychopathology that was created to promote the successful training of young scientists in the field.

Luby and her team have conducted trailblazing research in the early identification of depression and other mood disorders in preschoolers. This research has provided some of the most important data available worldwide for understanding depression risk factors and the progression to major psychiatric disorders.

Using neuroimaging, Luby’s group has begun to elucidate the way in which adverse environments influence brain development in children susceptible to early symptoms of depression. Her studies have provided the first evidence for biological markers in the youngest group of depressed humans identified to date. These studies are making major contributions to our knowledge of which children are most susceptible to the development of these disorders and to our understanding of the biology of susceptibility for depression. More broadly, her findings have important implications for understanding the development of mood disorders and for potentially preventing these devastating illnesses.

Luby’s work has received national and international recognition. She has published more than 90 papers in peer-reviewed journals and more than 35 invited papers. She has also edited two books, one of which was the first comprehensive text on preschool mental health.

Luby received her bachelor’s degree with honors from Brown University in 1981. After graduating from Wayne State University School of Medicine with her medical degree in 1985, she completed a medical internship and residency in general psychiatry at Stanford University. In 1990 she joined Washington University’s faculty.

The Washington University Medical Center Alumni Association is pleased to present its Faculty Achievement Award to Dr. Luby.