

Industry News

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The Canadian Academy of Audiology

Dr. Kathy Pichora-Fuller, PhD, honoured with the 2025 Carhart Memorial Award from the American Auditory Society



In 2025, Kathy Pichora-Fuller (Professor Emerita, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto) was selected to deliver the Raymond Carhart Lecture by the American Auditory Society. Raymond Carhart is often described as the “Father of Audiology,” and his memorial lecture recognizes those individuals whose current research is having a significant impact on auditory science and clinical practice, with the promise of continued impact over the rest of their career. I can’t think of anyone more deserving of this award than Professor Fuller.



For those that don't know, before Kathy became a professor, she worked as a clinical audiologist for 7 years at Mt. Sinai hospital in downtown Toronto. It was during this period, that she met the head of ENT, Dr. Peter Alberti. Now, if you don't know Peter, he's a rather imposing figure. I recall Kathy telling me stories of what would occur during grand rounds. On more than one occasion, nervous residents would shake in their boots as Dr. Alberti discussed cases with the team. And then...there was Kathy, responding with her steely gaze and calm confidence. During this period, Peter encouraged Kathy to write what would become her first paper ("Use of Telephone Amplifying Devices by the Hearing Impaired, Journal of Otolaryngology, 1981").

When I was first approached to deliver Kathy's introduction at the Carhart Lecture, in preparation, I asked for a copy of her CV. Quickly, I was overwhelmed as the document currently stands at 135 pages in length. Kathy has published over 140 articles in peer-reviewed journals, amassing over 15,000 citations, with three articles each having over 1,000 citations. She's written 29 chapters in books, and along with collaborators, secured 10s of millions of dollars in grant funding. Her output is simply astonishing.

Kathy has repeatedly demonstrated throughout her career that she is visionary in her perspectives about audiology, and while it does seem that she has a crystal ball about where the field is going, for the decades that I've been fortunate enough to know Kathy, she has repeatedly referenced to me that the broader Zeitgeist heavily influences science – that we and by extension science are products of the broader time in which we exist. Really, I think that to do justice for an introduction about Kathy, I have to discuss how Kathy has both been influenced by the broader events of the day, but also how she operates in a counter-cultural fashion. I'd like to start with her early years.

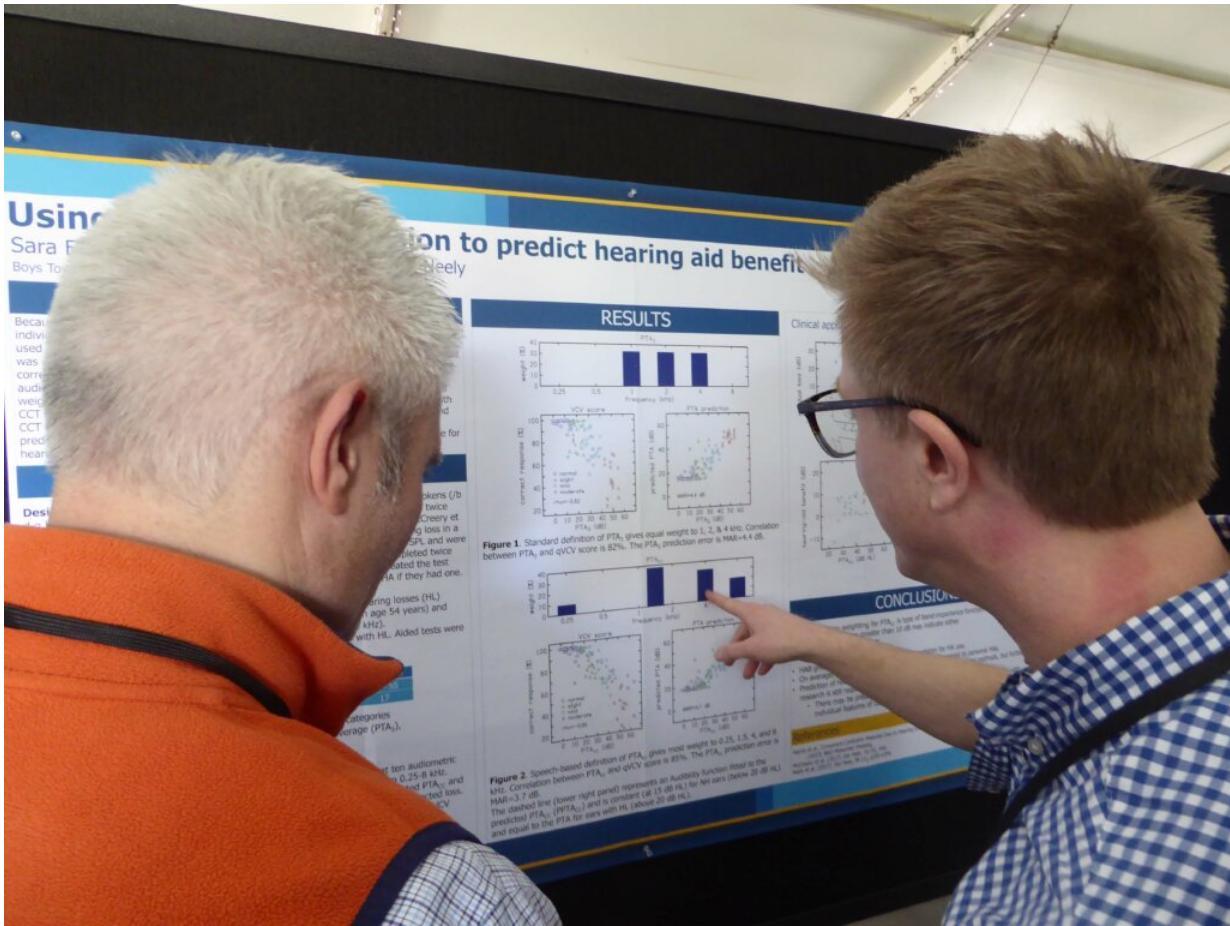
Kathy graduated from high school in 1973 where she was an outstanding student. One piece I'd like to highlight from these early years is that this was actually when she secured her first grant

from the elder Trudeau's government of Canada, a project to better understand learning outcomes. Obtaining this grant highlights the remarkable talent she possessed at an early age, but what I think is more interesting is that it reveals this capability that has been a hallmark of her career – which is this remarkable ability to put her finger on the pulse and to identify the important questions of the day. This the first takeaway I hope to achieve with this article, namely Kathy's ability to ask the right question and to communicate her vision to others.

After high school, Kathy was an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, and one of the interesting notes from this time is that she was a resident of the "Campus Cooperative Residence", a housing cooperative born of Rochdale College. Started in the midst of the hippie movement, Rochdale College in downtown Toronto, was an experimental student-run alternative education living space for 840 residents. This environment was mind-expanding for how it challenged the existing assumptions of the day and how people could best learn and best organize themselves.

THIS was an environment that by design was much more collaborative, and we see echoes of these principals throughout Kathy's career. At the co-op, naturally, Kathy took on a leadership role organizing meals for over a hundred students. Roommates at this time in Kathy's house included chemistry students from Taiwan, an American studying English Literature, a Brit from the UK studying bees (which often were kept in the house freezer), a refugee who had escaped Ceausescu's Romania and who later became a professor at Vassar, among others. This is the second takeaway that I hope to achieve with this introduction: Interdisciplinarity and developing relationships with international colleagues has been a long-standing staple of Kathy's career.

Let's move on to the Zeitgeist of today. One of the broader patterns we see today, perhaps, is the inflated role of ego, whether that be politicians, oligarchs, or athletes. Arguably, academics are not immune from having an inflated sense of ego. As researchers, we compete hard for credit, awards, and grants. We enjoy being thought of as experts. Researchers 'lecture' and 'profess' to others their beliefs and vision. We feel validated that others cite our work.



And this leads to the third takeaway I want to raise in this article: Kathy operates in stark contrast. This is a person who conducts herself completely without ego. It does not matter if it's a student or a chancellor, Kathy is simply not motivated by ego. All she expects is that a person tries to solve the problems the day.

So, keeping in mind that she knows how to ask important questions, how she operates with interdisciplinarity and colleagues from around the world, and that she does this without ego, I think it was a mistake to start her introduction talking about her number of publications and grant funding obtained. Instead, I should have started with this: namely, her service to the field.

Kathy has been a grant reviewer for 40 different national and International funding bodies. She has reviewed articles for over a 100 different journals. She has organized over 50 national and international conferences, including, along with Marshall Chasin, the World Congress of Audiology (2016). Kathy has given over 300 national and international presentations and has been tireless in her contributions to the field, whether for hearing loss advocacy groups, her peers and colleagues, or students. This article is simply too short to list how she has contributed to hearing care.

When others learned that Kathy was to delivering the Carhart Lecture, I received dozens of emails, stories, and pictures from her many colleagues. There is one I would like to share in particular. Professor Karen Li (Department of Psychology, Concordia University) graciously allowed me to share her words. In her email, she wrote: "Hi Gurjit - You will likely have many great KPF stories to draw upon by now. Let me add that Kathy is such a superstar in the field but operates completely without ego. A very recent example: I met with Kathy today and she mentioned the upcoming talk, showing a few slides. She said repeatedly that the goal was to honour Carhart's

legacy, and not that the society has chosen to honour her.”

So when I think of Kathy’s contribution to Audiology, three are three things I just find amazing about her. First, it’s her ability to identify the day’s important question and communicate this vision to others. Second, I stand in amazement of her interdisciplinarity and reach, and how she connects people from different training and cultural backgrounds. Third, I greatly admire how she does this all while operating with such little ego. And yes, while she officially retired in 2020, it should also be mentioned that her last grant submission took place in December, 2024, and her last published paper was accepted Feb. 1, 2025. Finally, on a more personal note, thank you Kathy for being my mentor, my colleague, my partner in crime, and my beloved friend.

Sincerely,

Gurjit Singh, PhD, Reg. CASLPO

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The Coalition for Global Hearing Health Hearing Care Pathways Working Group (a multi-national working group) has reached out to the Canadian Infant Hearing Task Force to ask for input from Canadian audiologists. They are conducting a survey to understand the status of services available for detection and intervention of hearing loss after the newborn period and up to the age of 17 yrs. The deadline for input is March 1st, 2025. Please consider completing one of their two surveys (linked below):

Survey for early childhood up to preschool: https://redcap.link/early_childhood_hearing_screening

Survey for school age up to 17 years of age: https://redcap.link/schoolage_hearing_screening

OTC sales now allowed in the United Kingdom

From ENT & Audiology newround

The UK Government's Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that tens of thousands of people with hearing loss will have access to new hearing aid devices, thanks to fresh guidance allowing businesses around the world to sell certain pioneering hearing aids here in the UK.

This includes earphones with both hearing test and hearing aid software functionalities. Such products allow someone to take a hearing test at home using their earphones and an app on their phone. If the test indicates mild to moderate hearing loss, the person can then switch on the hearing aid function on the same earphones. It is hoped that this will make it easier and more convenient for patients to manage their own health. Combatting hearing loss can also reduce associated risks such as social isolation.

In October, a new group was set up to ensure new technologies – such as AI for better treatments in our NHS and drones delivering emergency supplies to all corners of the UK, could reach the public faster. The Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) will reduce the burden for businesses hoping to bring new products and services to the market, including AI training software for surgeons to deliver more accurate surgical treatments for patients. It is hoped that this will speed up approvals and ensure different regulatory bodies work together smoothly.

According to the DHSC, one in three adults in the UK are deaf or experience hearing loss or tinnitus – which rises to more than 50% of over-55s. Of these, approximately 53% use hearing aids. Currently, there is uncertainty about whether patients are able to buy hearing aids directly, including as part of testing their hearing at home. Today's guidance will put an end to this confusion – speeding up patient access to the devices while making the UK an attractive place to manufacture innovative and wearable medical technology.

The DHSC promises that patient safety will be paramount, and the Government will ensure that all manufacturers comply with the relevant legislation. People will also still be encouraged to seek clinical advice through their GP if they are having problems with their hearing. Patients can also have hearing tests at some pharmacists and opticians too.

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