



Editorial

Effective Utility of APSI Awards, Grants, and Fellowships

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Indian J Plast Surg 2024;57:1–3.

The executive council (EC) of Association of Plastic Surgeons of India (APSI) meets at the beginning of the conference each year to select awardees for various awards and fellowships apart from other agendas. Despite being one of the most crucial tasks for the EC, unfortunately, it is not the most difficult one! This is simply because the applications for various fellowships and grants are either few or mostly single applicants for each award or, at times, none. Worse, often there is a single applicant for multiple awards. The job of the EC becomes easier by “allocating” them to those few who applied without much thoughtful consideration or a selection process. To me, this is a more pressing issue that demands honest reflection and deep delving to find the causes and remedies.

For ease of understanding, these awards and fellowships may be broadly classified into the following: (1) awards requiring applications from the eligible members, (2) awards with nominations only, and (3) awards proposed by the President of the APSI/EC/award committee. A panel of judges evaluates the competitive awards and sometimes requires a podium presentation at the annual conference. To make it clear, I have prepared a table that outlines the awards for which members need to apply (► **Table 1**).

The President of the APSI has the privilege to nominate certain awards that do not involve the application process (► **Table 2**). All Orations, Lectures, Visiting Professorships, and some lifetime achievement awards for senior members are proposed by the President of the APSI in consultation with members of the award committee, which are then approved by the EC and passed subsequently by the General Body of the association. An ordinary member is not involved in the selection process of these awards except for giving assent in the general body meeting (GBM), barring exceptions. However, I draw your attention to those awards that a member can apply for and get through a selection process.

Most of these fellowships and competitive awards are meant for younger plastic surgeons and a few are for post-

graduate members as well. With an increasing number of members joining in, there is a significant surge of junior plastic surgeons in the association. Yet, we do not see the expected enthusiastic participation in seeking these awards. For example, a reputed Kilner essay is for members within 10 years of her or his completion of training. The author is expected to work independently, document, and come out with a good series of cases, analyze, and write an essay. This is similar to writing a mini-dissertation, which every postgraduate is aware of. There is now a surpassing number of bright and talented young colleagues in the association. Yet there is a lack of a sufficient number of reasonable quality of submissions for this award. Is it too much to expect at least 5% of them to write an essay within 10 years of completion of their training? In my optimistic expectations, this will ensure approximately 25 essays a year or at least a double-digit entry. Look at the positive benefits; even if one misses the award to worthy competitors, the most important outcome of these efforts for the author includes discovering their writing ability, cultivating record-keeping habits, and obtaining potential publication material for an original article. This will provide impetus for further incentives for a fruitful academic career, which is an essential arm of a successful professional career. I believe the tardy response from members for these APSI awards seems largely due to the lack of awareness or missing application deadline rather than any lesser value attributed to them.

APSI grants different training fellowships in India and abroad based on the respective corpus funds assigned to them. International travel fellowships provide an opportunity for a junior member to choose any internationally reputed center for their training. Given the importance and opportunity associated with this, we anticipate a substantial number of applicants, contrary to the present situation. Similarly, for domestic fellowships, there are just a few applicants, and some are repeated from the same applicant for different awards. I am indeed happy to see that some members are well informed and consistently compete

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0044-1779599>.
ISSN 0970-0358.

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Table 1 APSI awards, fellowships and grants

Awards/fellowship/grants	Type	Eligibility
Kilner Essay	Essay + presentation	<10 y of MCh/DNB
Peet Prize	Full-text + presentation	All members
APSI Junior Best Paper Award ^a	Full text + APSICON podium presentation	PGs or within 1 y after PG
Mrs. Saroja Bose and Dr. Sam C. Bose Award for Audit and Research	Full text + podium	Any member
Publication awards		
N.H. Antia Publication Award Armed Forces endowment best case report or ideas and innovation in IJPS R.N. Sinha Award for Best Paper in IJPS	Article published in any journal/ Published in IJPS	Article published in the previous calendar year
Travel fellowships: international		
APSICON 2010-Goa-2 9th IPRAS International-1 R.G. Saraiya Overseas Training -1	International travel fellowship and grant	Any member/within 10 y of PG
Training fellowships: national		
Brig. Kathpalia Hand Surgery/KEM Dr. Tambwekar Microsurgery/IX IPRAS Fund National/Myovatec Training fellowship Plastic surgery/Vasudhan Arjin Fellowship Laser Surgery/Chennai Fellowships	National travel and training fellowship	Any member or junior member
APSI sponsorship for PGs	Grant to attend APSICON for two PGs	PGs can apply through the HOD
Grants		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APSICON 2010 Goa Research Grant • Plastic Surgery Venture Fund • APSI Education Foundation • Prof. C R Sundararajan national education fund • International Visiting Scholar Program APSICON 2012/ • 15th IPRAS Humanitarian Fund Grant • Various Grants for the Promotion of Scientific Activity in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mumbai, Chennai, and UP 	Various grants for research, humanitarian services, promotional activities, CME, or for inviting visiting international scholars	

Note: The deadline for submission is July 31 every year, to be sent to the Hon Secretary, APSI.

^aEntries to be sent to Organizers of APSICON.

for these awards, but this does not necessarily reflect the rest of the association. These opportunities should be sought after by young plastic surgeons early in their careers, and I believe they are a once-in-a-lifetime chance to seek mentorship. However, a very anemic response probably suggests lack of understanding of a new member or a new applicant to the APSI. The situation is no different in publication awards as well.

All publication awards—NH Antia Best Paper, RN Sinha award, and Arm Forces Endowment awards—require members to apply with details of their publication. I am sure a significant number of articles are published by our members in different journals, and if they miss claiming their worthy publication, they will lose the award. The eligibility period is limited to 1 year and cannot be reclaimed or reapplied.

The applications for various grants continue to receive the lowest response rate.¹ There are several grants such as the APSICON 2010 Goa Research Grant, 15th IPRAS Humanitarian

Fund, Plastic Surgery Venture Fund, APSI Education Foundation, Prof C R Sundararajan Plastic Surgery Education Funds, and so on. Any member can apply for these grants with due process of proposals. I am certain that with the increase in the number of academic institutes offering postgraduate programs, these grants will provide research opportunities for various departments.

By taking a strategic approach, we can improve this by helping members understand the different awards, eligibilities, application processes, and deadlines well ahead of time. This requires collaborative efforts by both the association and its members to understand their privileges.

There are a few remedial measures that I have put together for the association to consider:

- *A welcome kit for all new members:* A welcome kit with all information that a member needs to know, such as his or her rights and privileges and his or her eligibility for various annual awards and applications for fellowships,

Table 2 Awards by nomination only -awarded by the APSI President or award committee

Award name	Criteria
K S Shekar Plastic Surgeon for the Year	Nomination/award committee
PGIMER DR. SAWHNEY: Teacher of the Year PGIMER I. T. Jackson Cleft & Craniofacial Surgery	Nomination/award committee
APSI: Dr. S Raja Sabapathy Leadership Award ^a	Nomination/eligible members may apply
Orations and Lectures	
Gilles Oration/Sushruta Oration/MM Mukherjee Oration/Dr. C. Balakrishnan Lecture/Dr. AC Ganguly memorial lecture/Dr. S N Sharma endowment lecture	Awarded by the APSI President/EC/Committee
Visiting Professorships	
Microsurgery, Plastic Surgery, Aesthetic Surgery & Gen NC Sanyal Armed forces Professorship	Awarded by the APSI President/committee
Awards judged during APSICON	
McNeil Audiovisual Award: among APSI junior papers Kamath Memorial Prize for best poster Quiz competition award	Awarded by the Judges Winners of Quiz

^aAPSI-Raja Sabapathy award involves both nomination and application from members.

should be provided to all new members. This could include the deadline for each application. Early engagement can assist in improving communication.

- *Early announcements:* Early announcements, preferably at the beginning of the new year, should be made with relevant details for these awards and grants so that the applicants get sufficient time of at least 6 months to prepare and submit applications.
- *Proactive promotion by the EC:* Every EC member may promote these awards so that the information about the awards reaches the eligible members in their respective contacts and groups.
- *Information page on APSICON Web site:* Organizers of the conference may mandatorily dedicate a page with all information on awards. Members are more likely to visit these pages frequently. At least a URL link must be provided for easy access.
- *Award ceremony in APSICON:* These awards are being given out at the beginning of the Charles Pinto CME during the inauguration when most of the audience members are still arriving. It would be ideal to choose a time when the maximum number of audience members are present, which, in my opinion, is just before the morning tea break. Receiving awards in front of all members is a way of honoring the recipient while creating awareness and inspiring others to participate.

- *A Special Edition of the APSI Newsletter:* As a reminder and with comprehensive information, a special edition of the APSI newsletter, apart from regular ones, will serve as a ready reckoner for members.
- *Awareness lectures in academic institutions:* The association sponsors two postgraduates to participate in the APSICON. The faculty may guide a senior postgraduate in presenting details of the awards in their teaching sessions. This will inspire younger postgraduates to look for participation in such competitions.

The need of the hour is to encourage eligible members to apply for awards so that the awards are effectively utilized and fulfil their purpose. The demand from eligible applicants increases the value of awards and the worth of APSI membership. The association can offer more such value-added services in the future. The APSI needs to escalate its efforts to attract nonmembers, who are a significant group and cannot be ignored for long.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Reference

- 1 APSI. APSI Newsletters. Available till August 2022. Accessed January 17, 2024 at: https://apsi.in/member_newsletter.php