The Association of Women Surgeons Foundation

MISSION:
To provide opportunities for the educational & professional growth of women in surgery

WHAT WE DO:
The AWS Foundation is dedicated to sponsoring activities that advance women’s careers in surgery and address gender disparities worldwide.
Support for Women Surgeons in Low and Middle-Income Countries

Africa and Southeast Asia have one-third of the world’s population, the highest burden of surgical disease, but only one surgeon for every 200,000 people. Thanks to your generosity and that of the Hellman Foundation, AWSF has made a lasting global impact by enabling women surgical trainees to access the training and board examinations provided by the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA). Since 93% of COSECSA surgical graduates remain on the African continent, this training will improve patient access to surgical care. In addition, because COSECSA certified surgeons can become surgical trainers, the benefit of AWSF’s contributions will be amplified. Women in Surgery Africa (WiSA), which operates under the COSECSA umbrella, is an AWS Partner. AWSF provides travel grants to enable African women surgeons to attend the Annual COSECSA and WiSA conferences.

COSECSA trainees sit for two exams: the Membership (MCS) exam after two years of training, and the final Fellowship (FCS) exam after an additional two to three years. After passing MCS, trainees pay a $500 registration fee to COSECSA to continue their training. Due to financial constraints, many trainees fail to complete their training. AWSF and the American College of Surgeons’ (ACS) Operation Giving Back (OGB) program each pay 50% of the registration fees for ten women surgical trainees. In addition, AWSF and ACS’s OGB each contributed 50% of the costs for five women trainees who passed their final examination and became board certified in 2018, and will offer the same support to 13 trainees in 2019.

The two 2018 AWSF LMIC Travel Grant Recipients are pictured below with AWS leaders.

“Supporting women works. Providing grants and leadership training, supporting educational activities and advocating for important issues, while showing the rich life women surgeons enjoy has led to a dramatic increase in the number of women choosing surgery as a career and becoming leaders. There is still more to be done!”

Patricia J. Numann, MD, FACS
ACS Past President
AWS Founder

“I write to convey my deep gratitude for the travel grant. My people back home are very proud of it, me being the only doctor in the family. Please share the pictures that you may have of you presenting it to me to show them back home. Thank you again.”

Dr. Heta Gohil
Pediatric Surgery Resident, Kenya

“I am very grateful for the travel grant from AWS and honored to have been chosen to receive the award. Thank you so much for everything and please pass on my gratitude to the whole team from AWS; it really means a lot.”

Dr. Metasebia Worku Abebe
Plastic Surgery Resident, Ethiopia
The five 2018 Women Scholars pictured at their graduation in Rwanda with ACS leaders

Dr. Mumba Chalwe Kaja was Zambia’s first female urologist and obtained first place in the 2018 COSECSA FCS Exam. She is a co-founder of Stiletto Ink, an organization that focuses on adult sexual and reproductive wellbeing. She wants her accomplishments to inspire others. She says, “iron sharpens iron – if women and girls can see fellow women as achievers outside the domestic sphere, they can aim higher.”

Dr. Yemisirach Akililu is a final year neurosurgery resident at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. She worked as a general practitioner before eventually commencing her training in neurosurgery. She has an interest in global surgery and recently presented her work at a symposium at Cornell University in New York.

Dr. Happiness Rabiel is training in neurosurgery at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences in Tanzania. She is one of the first two female neurosurgical trainees in the country.

Dr. Aingaya Kaale is training in neurosurgery at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She is one of the first two female neurosurgical trainees in the country.

Dr. Kad Musas, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is training in general surgery at University Teaching Hospital, Lusaka, Zambia.
Support for Women Surgeons in Low and Middle-Income Countries CONTINUED

AWSF provided Dr. Agneta Odera, Chair of WiSA, with a stipend towards travel costs to attend and speak at the first combined Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – AWS meeting in Dublin, Ireland in 2018. Dr. Odera is a pediatric surgeon at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya who wishes to train in pediatric cardiothoracic surgery. Dr. Odera obtained first place in the 2018 COSECSA Final Fellowship Examination in pediatric surgery.

“It was a humbling experience to meet our supporters in person. What was comforting to learn was that irrespective of where we are geographically, we as women surgeons share the same challenges in training, career, and balancing other life responsibilities, albeit with some cultural differences. It was a pleasure to highlight the growth we have made in the last three years and show the rise of some of the female surgeons in the COSECSA region who are making a big difference with their leadership and support.”

Dr. Agneta Odera, Chair, WiSA

In partnership with Vanderbilt University Department of Surgery and John and Maggie Tarpley, AWSF provided Dr. Beryl Akinyi Ooro with a grant to attend the 2019 Surgical Education Week in Chicago. Dr. Akinyi Ooro is a general surgeon at AIC Kijabe Hospital in Kenya, where she also serves as the assistant program director for the general surgery residency program.

“The conference opened my eyes to the scope of surgical education that I had not thought of or seen before. I think the amount of energy and thought put into surgical education in the US is amazing, and the fact that there is a week that is dedicated to that specifically. My main objective for the visit was to see what is out there and see what I can incorporate into our program to make it better. I learnt a lot. The burden now is how to execute what I learnt into the program. I am forever grateful to AWSF for providing me with this opportunity.”

Dr. Beryl Akinyi Ooro
Receiving the 2018 AWSF Patricia Numann Medical Student Award has impacted my career in several ways. It has shown me the incredible power of mentorship and advocacy. A simple letter of nomination from my medical school mentor opened up a world of inspiring surgeons through AWS that I would never have encountered otherwise. Similarly, winning the award helped me see myself as a capable future leader in surgery. During the challenging times of intern year, the support of AWS served as a reminder that I belong and was motivation to continue to pursue excellence. Lastly, the Awards Dinner itself was an inspiring display of the support within the surgical community for AWS and women surgeons that I will never forget.

Dr. Lisa Bevilacqua
2018 AWSF Patricia Numann Medical Student Award Recipient

Trauma is the third leading cause of death in Mongolia. In the past, Advanced Trauma Life Support® (ATLS®) courses were taught there by international faculty with interpreters. This was less than ideal for a course that demands a rapid response. Dr. Sarnia Erdene has been instrumental in the translation and coordination of the ATLS program in Mongolia. AWSF provided her with a grant to enable her to become a qualified ATLS instructor. Now she will play a significant leadership role as a countrywide ATLS director and will allow wider dissemination of the course throughout the country and save many young lives.

“With the generous support you provided, I was able attend the ATLS Instructor course in Melbourne, successfully complete the ATLS instructor course, and am now recognized as Instructor Candidate. We have just finished translating the tenth edition of the ATLS student manual into Mongolian and are planning Instructor and Provider courses in September. With the certificate and the experience I gained from this course, I will be able to help other Instructors in Mongolia and teach many physicians and residents throughout Mongolia. Thank you very much for your support and all your help.”

Dr. Sarnia Erdene

Patricia Numann Medical Student Award

“Receiving the 2018 AWSF Patricia Numann Medical Student Award has impacted my career in several ways. It has shown me the incredible power of mentorship and advocacy. A simple letter of nomination from my medical school mentor opened up a world of inspiring surgeons through AWS that I would never have encountered otherwise. Similarly, winning the award helped me see myself as a capable future leader in surgery. During the challenging times of intern year, the support of AWS served as a reminder that I belong and was motivation to continue to pursue excellence. Lastly, the Awards Dinner itself was an inspiring display of the support within the surgical community for AWS and women surgeons that I will never forget.”

Dr. Lisa Bevilacqua
2018 AWSF Patricia Numann Medical Student Award Recipient
"Over the years, Dr. Ephgrave became a valued colleague, mentor and friend. To be named as the AWS Dr. Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor in 2018, six years after her death, was an opportunity to not only share my memories of Kim, but to also give back to AWS by promoting its mission and ideals. I enjoyed interacting with both female and male medical students, residents, and faculty at the University of Texas Dell Medical School. I shared my experiences as an AWS member and highlighted the benefits of membership, the goals of AWS, and why it is still as important as the day it was founded. It also provided me with the chance to share my own experiences regarding building resilience in a surgical career. Obtaining this Professorship was a crucial piece in helping me build my ‘speaker brand’ and led to other opportunities which will no doubt help in my application for promotion and career advancement."

Dr. Geeta Lal
2018 AWSF Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor

I believe strongly in supporting causes that make a difference. I gift carefully to a few selected groups. The AWS Foundation is one of my first gifting donations because of the people I met at AWS and the impact they have had. I have seen the visibility and voice of women surgeons grow so much more strongly because of the AWS leaders and their work. I believe deeply that we must continue to support efforts to promote and support women in surgery and will thus always donate to the Foundation in order to help them in these important efforts.

Dr. Myriam Curet
AWS Past President

As a woman surgeon, we all have our unique stories to tell. I could not have finished my training if I did not have scholarship help. Now is the time to give back. Let’s support AWS with funds, so we can encourage and welcome more female surgeons in the future.

Yeu-Tsu Margaret Lee, MD, FACS
“Women begin their careers with fewer resources and receive significantly lower salaries than their male counterparts. Women, particularly minority women, are more vulnerable to discrimination, both explicit and implicit. I donate to AWSF in order to support the programs that address these disparities through our travel grants and visiting professor programs that advance the careers and professional development of women surgeons not just in the USA but also around the world.”

Hilary Sanfey MB. BCh. FACS
Chair, AWS Foundation

“The AWS Foundation is a, if not THE, major supporter of gender equity and diversity in surgery today. The programs, opportunities, fellowships, and community provided are having a daily impact. Becoming a foundation donor was a great way for me to support and enhance these critical activities. I encourage you to be a donor – help to move our surgical community forward!!”

Ron Maier, MD, FACS
ACS President 2018-2019
AWS Honorary Member

“By contributing a portion of my annual charitable contributions to the AWS Foundation, I feel like I am continuing to honor and lift up the strong and courageous women here in the US and around the world who have chosen to become women surgeons. Each of these incredible people has worked hard to not only succeed personally, but also to leverage their efforts to help many others. I have also included the Foundation in my will, so that we can continue our mission for many years to come.”

Joyce Majure, MD, FACS
AWS Founding Member

Donate to the Association of Women Surgeons Foundation and support women in surgery today!
Donate to the Association of Women Surgeons Foundation

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You may direct your contribution to one of our current programs. All donations count towards the level of donor recognition.

☐ Empower Fund (General Operating) *gift will be allocated according to the greatest need
☐ Patricia Numann Medical Student Award

☐ Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor Program
☐ Starr Poster Contest for Medical Students & Residents

☐ Women Surgeons in Low & Middle-Income Countries
☐ Dr. Sally Abston Distinguished Member Award

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Thank you for your generous support of the AWS Foundation and its mission to provide opportunities for the educational and professional growth of women in surgery.