



The Association of Women Surgeons Foundation

MISSION:

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



Association of Women Surgeons Foundation

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Women Scholars Program

Africa and Southeast Asia have a quarter of the world's population, the highest burden of surgical disease, and yet only one surgeon for every 200,000 people. Although women make up more than 50% of the population, they represent only 7% of the surgical work force. Thanks to donor generosity and support from the Hellman Foundation, AWSF is having a lasting global impact by partnering with the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Operation Giving Back (OGB) Women Scholars Program. (www.facs.org/ogb/cosecsa-program)

This program enables women surgical trainees to access the training and board examinations provided by the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA). COSECSA trainees sit two exams; the Membership (MCS) after two years of training and the final Fellowship (FCS) exam after an additional 2-3 years. AWSF and the ACS – OGB Program each contribute fifty-percent of the educational expenses related to the required examinations for up to twenty women surgical trainees. Since 93% of COSECSA surgical graduates remain on the African continent this improves access to optimal surgical care. In addition, COSECSA certified surgeons can go on to become surgical educators, thus amplifying the benefit.



"For over 50 years watching women not get their fair share, I feel compelled to contribute to causes that specifically support women. The many uses of the AWS Foundation funds make an important difference. Women must support women."

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



2021 Women Scholars



Dr. Bezayit Tesfaye
*Resident at St. Paul's Millenium
Medical College*



Dr. Elsa Daniel Alemayehu
*Resident at Black Lion
Hospital, Addis Ababa
University*



Dr. Felista Moraa Mose
*General Surgeon at University
of Nairobi*



Dr. Hellina Legesse Mamo
*Resident at Addis Ababa
University*



Dr. Thitai Juliet
*Chief Resident of Orthopedic
Surgery at the University of
Nairobi*



Dr. Kondjela Sara Hamunyela
*Head of Paediatric Surgical
Department, Namibia Ministry
of Health*



Dr. Makena Jean Mbogori
*Senior Registrar in the
Orthopedic Surgery
Department at Nairobi Hospital*



Dr. Mekdelawit Mesfin
*Resident at Addis Ababa
University*



Dr. Shikuria Lemma Nida
*Resident at Black Lion
Hospital, Addis Ababa
University*



Dr. Nimanya Stella Alice
*COSECSA Paediatric Surgery
Fellow at Mulago National
Referral Hospital*

AWSF Travel Grants

The AWSF provides travel grants to enable African women surgeons to attend the Annual COSECSA and WiSA conferences. Women in Surgery Africa (WiSA), which operates under the COSECSA umbrella, is an AWS Partner. The two 2018 recipients are pictured below with AWS leaders.



"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 AWSF 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 AWSF; it really means a lot."

Dr. Metasebia Worku Abebe
Plastic Surgery Resident, Ethiopia

AWSF Low and Middle Income Country (LMiC) Educational Grants

This award was established in 2016 to enable a woman surgeon from a LMiC to attend a surgical meeting, participate in a workshop, or other career development or educational opportunity.

In 2021, AWSF supported Dr. Wairiuma Ndegwa, a surgeon and educator at the Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital in Kenya, in pursuit of a Masters Degree.



"What is in a legacy? Over time, I have found myself asking this question and seeking the answer to what I shall be remembered; this has influenced what I now do. This, in turn, is shaped by what I have done."

Having gone through medical school in Russia, I applied and began an internship at a rural resource-limited district hospital, enrolling into a surgical residency at a community-based hospital. My journey of achieving such a legacy has not been without hurdles, but to say it has not been immensely gratifying would also be amiss. There are small tokens like a smile of gratitude from a patient who comes back to the clinic, a child eager to see you and still wary of you in your white coat and a firm handshake from a family patriarch grateful that he is reunited with his family. I can only fathom the impact of the community level, county, and country-level to give the people the health care they deserve."

A Masters in International Public Health would be the first step to realizing the widespread availability of equitable healthcare. The opportunity to do this online from the Liverpool John Moores University has been made possible through the generous scholarship accorded to me by the Association of Women Surgeons Foundation; with their generous donation I and by extension, we are one step closer to the realization of what could be a legacy for the people I am eager to serve in my home country."

Wairimu Ndegwa, MD, FCS, (ECSA) – General Surgery

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 in 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 learned a lot. The burden now is how to execute what I learned into the program. I am forever grateful to AWSF for providing me with this opportunity."

Dr. Beryl Akinyi Ooro

AAWSF Low and Middle Income Country (LMiC) Educational Grants (continued)

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. Dr. Erdene now has the training and credentials to lead as a countrywide ATLS director, facilitating wider dissemination of ATLS instruction throughout Mongolia.

"With the generous support you provided, I was able to 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



Kim Ephgrave Visting Professor Program



"Through the AWSF, I had the opportunity to call Kim Ephgrave my friend. To be named a 2021 Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor was truly an honor and a privilege and I am grateful to the AWSF for providing me such a wonderful opportunity. The professorship was hosted for the first time by a community program, the Department of Surgery at Chester Crozier in Pennsylvania. It was a real pleasure to interact with the many female faculty and residents, to hear their stories, challenges and successes. There were a few hurdles to overcome for my Grand Rounds talk, as the hospital was transitioning to an electronic medical record on that very day! My determined and resilient hosts made sure my day was flawless, despite the technologic challenges they were facing. We had a few laughs and I said good-bye to some amazing women."

Rosemary Kozar, MD, PhD, FACS
2021 AWSF Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor

Kim Ephgrave Visting Professor Program (continued)



"My experience as the Kim Ephgrave visiting professor was truly unique. I visited the University of Kentucky, where I met with faculty, students, residents and community leaders. The department has created a system where younger faculty members "host" a visiting professor, arranging meetings, providing transportation and guidance during their visit. I was fortunate to be paired with Dr. Erin Burke, who arranged a truly special visit for me. As a trauma surgeon with an interest in injury and violence prevention, I felt like I was able to embody the mission of the Association of Women Surgeons Foundation by meeting and encouraging women surgeons of all stages to embrace their interests, even when they are nontraditional for their field. I gave a Grand Rounds presentation on Trauma Informed Practice which stimulated rich feedback and conversation. I was able to meet with a group of local coalition leaders interested in violence prevention in Lexington, and share the lessons learned as we have taken a public health approach to violence prevention in Newark. It was truly inspiring to see so many people, from students, to other surgeons both women and men, to a diverse representation of the community, all interested in helping others and improving the world where they are able."

Stephanie Bonne, MD FACS

2020 AWSF Kim Ephgrave Visiting Professor



Kim Ephgrave Visting Professor Program (continued)



"I started my visit to the University of Minnesota with a visit to the Children's Hospital and a conference with the division of Pediatric Surgery. After a lovely tour of the hospital, we had several case presentations and discussions with students and residents on the pediatric surgery service. Afterwards I was able to meet one-on-one with Dr. Randi Lassiter, the newest member of the pediatric surgery team.

For the afternoon, I traveled over to the medical school where I spoke with the Women in Surgery Interest Group in a hybrid lecture format on "The journey is the end: lessons learned along the way." We had 25 medical students in attendance and additional attendees via zoom. Although the room was predominantly women, there were a few #HeForShe students in attendance as well! I was delighted to have time after the talk to be able to engage with the students in a group and one-one-one to answer their questions about being a woman surgeon, having a family and a surgical career, advice on pursuing research, an additional degree, mentorship, and many other topics. Following my meeting with the medical students, I met individually with several women faculty in the department of surgery and discussed challenges of diversity, equity and inclusion, faculty development and faculty retention. I was also pleased to hear from their departmental diversity committee to hear about efforts underway in their department and to share experiences and resources. My first day was topped off with a lovely dinner with four women surgeons.

My second day at the University of Minnesota started with M&M and then my Grand Rounds presentation on Advocacy, Activism, and the Surgeon. It was very well attended, and we had an excellent Q&A session after, despite the zoom format since we could not gather as a large group. I was pleased to meet after Grand Rounds with the residents in a smaller hybrid session where I could meet in person with many of them. The residents presented many of their research topics and then we had a lively discussion on challenges in residency, increasing diversity in surgery and improving wellness and resiliency. After a lovely lunch with the organizing medical students, I had several more afternoon meetings with women surgical faculty and with the Chair of the department. It was a fantastic exchange of ideas, discussion, resources, and I felt honored and privileged to meet with so many individuals and groups at all levels, medical students, residents, junior faculty and senior faculty. I hope that the individuals at the University of Minnesota gained as much from the experience as I did as it was a wonderful experience all around!"

Marion C. W. Henry, MD, MPH, FACS
2020 Kim Ephgrave Visting Professor



AWSF Awards

The AWSF annually awards exemplary surgeons, surgeons-in-training, and non-surgeons who support the mission of the AWS.

(<https://www.womensurgeons.org/page/Awards>)

"Through my work with RCSI, I have long admired the work of the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) to improve access to trained surgeons for the people of Africa. Knowing that my donation to the AWS Foundation is used to directly assist young women surgeons in Africa to access specialist training and career development opportunities makes me proud to support AWSF. With the support of AWSF, some of these young surgeons will be future leaders of our profession."



Deborah McNamara, MD

2019 Olga Jonasson Distinguished Member Award Winner



"After joining the AWS as a resident and having co-residents and mentors become colleagues and friends, it is critically important to me to support an award that honors a woman who was such a pivotal figure for her residents and faculty colleagues. Dr. Sally Abston forged her own path and her work in burn surgery has changed the lives of thousands of burn patients, but she is remembered as a fierce advocate for students and colleagues alike. This is a quality that is hard to quantify but critical to the growth and development of all surgeons. I support the Dr. Sally Abston AWS Distinguished Member Award to ensure the ongoing celebration of surgeons who serve as role models to us all."

Laura Johnson, MD

2020 Dr. Sally Abston AWS Distinguished Member Award Winner

"Receiving the AWSF Patricia Numann Medical Student Award was an incredible honour. I first got involved with the Association of Women Surgeons as a first-year medical student and then served on the AWS National Medical Student Committee for two years. Overall, the opportunities AWS has offered me strengthened my interest in surgery, gave me the confidence to pursue my dreams of becoming a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, and helped me grow tremendously as a person and as a leader. I am so grateful to my mentors and the organization and hope to give back to the community in my career."



Abra Shen, MD

2021 Patricia Numann Medical Student Award Winner

Words From Our Donors



I believe strongly in supporting causes which 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.

Myriam Curet, MD, 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 of my generation never knew other women surgeons while we were in training or indeed junior faculty, and it is only in the last 25 years or so through the Association of Women Surgeons that I have been fortunate enough to meet several women surgeons who have become mentors and friends. I chose to endow the AWS Hilary Sanfey Outstanding Resident Award so that each year a surgical resident could have the opportunity to meet and network with the women leaders in surgery, who can serve as mentors and champion their future careers.

Hilary Sanfey, MB, BCh, MD, FRCSI, FACS. Past-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, AWS Honorary Member

Words From Our Donors



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



The AWS is one of the most vibrant and effective surgical organizations in the world in its mission to engage and empower women surgeons throughout their careers. My personal support of the AWS Foundation is one meaningful way I have found to contribute to the development of an increasingly diverse next-generation of surgical leaders and to demonstrate commitment to a more equitable and inclusive future for our profession.

Jeffery B. Matthews, MD, FACS



The key word in the mission of the AWS Foundation is "opportunities." I choose to donate to the AWSF because the opportunities afforded by these scholarships have a lasting impact. Sometimes, all one needs to succeed and thrive is an opportunity. It is a joy for me to support other women in the pursuit of their educational and professional aspirations via the AWSF.

Robin Williams, MD, FACS



I joined AWS as a medical student in 2012, and since that time it has been the glue that has held my training and career together. The support of friends and mentors alike has been invaluable to me. The AWSF is at the heart of the organization, putting into action everything that AWS members stand for. I am proud to contribute to the AWSF mission knowing that it provides support to acknowledge mentors and leaders, honor accomplished students and trainees, advance research, and uplift women surgeons internationally.

Lauren Nosanov, MD

Association of Women Surgeons Foundation

Donations may be made online at www.womensurgeons.org/donations.

Please contact the AWSF Executive Director at info@womensurgeons.org if you would like to discuss making a material or in-kind contribution, or make a donation through a Donor Advised Fund, a Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA, or a Charitable Bequest through your will or trust.

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