

The Edward H. Angle Research Prize

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Twenty years ago at a lodge in Sun Valley, Idaho, Dr Ram Nanda was awarded the first Edward H. Angle Research Prize. What is this award? What does it mean and what has happened to it since then?

The award was originally established by the Board of Directors of the Angle Foundation in 1987. The motion establishing the award read in part, "... Edward H. Angle Research Prize to be presented at each Biennial Meeting of The E. H. Angle Education and Research Foundation to the member publishing the outstanding article in *The Angle Orthodontist* during the preceding biennium." Thereafter, the award was presented at every biennial meeting since 1981. Most recently, at the 2009 Angle Biennial Meeting the award went to James A McNamara, Jr and co-author Yan Gu. A list of all awardees can be found by going to <http://www.angle.org> and, in the lower right hand corner of the page, click on "To view the names of all prize recipients in previous years *click here*". The list is also printed in the *The Angle Orthodontist* in the March issue of even numbered years.

The *Angle Orthodontist* was established in 1931 by a small group of Angle's students shortly after Dr Angle's death. The newly widowed Mother Angle was the first editor. However, The Edward H. Angle Research Prize was not adopted by the Board of the Angle Foundation until 1987 and the first award was in 1991. Since the original motion called for the prize to be awarded to, "... member publishing the outstanding article in *The Angle Orthodontist* during the preceding biennium" it is not surprising that the motion was a relatively internal matter.

Some believed that this limitation applied to the *The Angle Orthodontist* as well, but the electronic age has accelerated the development of a substantial international following for the journal. This is clearly exemplified by the obvious fact that most of the articles in the journal are now authored by non-Angle Society members. The apparent incongruity between the journal's international character and the relatively internal Edward H. Angle Research prize was recognized long ago.

The issue has never been about whether or not non-Society members should be recognized. The answer to

this question was never in dispute. Rather the question has been much more about how to preserve the honor and prestige earned by the work of former winners while also recognizing the role of all contemporary contributors.

Like all changes that impact on many people, any change in the award would have numerous difficult practical questions. What if a winning paper has a non-Angle member as author and an Angle member as a coauthor? Or vice versa? All such imaginable combinations do occur. Should there one award or are their multiple awards? Historically the Edward H. Angle Research Prize also has had a small cash award. How would a new system handle this?

Some believe that a prize should be awarded in both clinical research and basic research categories. Apart from the difficulties in sorting manuscripts into these discrete categories, others support the role of the journal in bringing clinical and basic work together in support of evidence based clinical procedures. In its broadest sense, basic research means research undertaken without an application in mind; applied research means research undertaken with an application in mind and clinical research simply means there are patients involved. Many think we would have great difficulty sorting the published articles into such discrete categories upon which all could agree.

There is no doubt that this award has grown in prestige and the original fundamental purpose of the award must be remembered. Some believe the award can serve a very useful purpose as an incentive for high quality research. With Edward H. Angle as the putative founding father of modern orthodontics in mind, one highly regarded orthodontist suggested to me that this prize could thus serve a function analogous to an orthodontic Nobel Prize. The Nobel Prize is an interdisciplinary award with several categories and worldwide competition. Is this a model to emulate? The prize(s?) could conceivably bring a win-win situation to all involved. Any review and possible changes in the award could, at the very least, only be constructive and bring greater kudos and peer recognition for all our authors.