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The GRAMMER European Spine Journal Award: now 20,000 euros

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The GRAMMER European Spine Journal Award was awarded for the third time at the meeting of the Spine Society of Europe, which was held this year in Nantes. This award is donated on an annual basis for the best basic science paper published in the *European Spine Journal* over the previous academic year.

Within the spinal community, this scientific award is already well recognized and carries great prestige. Due to its initial success, the Editorial Board of the *European Spine Journal* has decided to give it even greater weight by contributing a further 10,000 euros to the prize. Together with the original 10,000 euros donated by GRAMMER, the prize now stands at 20,000 euros, and this will be awarded for the first time in 2003 in Prague, for the best paper in the upcoming issues until September 2003. **This is the highest amount of any award in spinal research, worldwide.**

How can this award be won?

The procedure is different from other awards. It is not necessary to submit a paper within a certain deadline to a certain committee. Each paper submitted to the *European Spine Journal* dealing with basic science qualifies automatically for this award as soon as it has been published.

This best paper of the year will be announced with a comment in one of

the first issues in the following year. It will also be announced at the next Annual Meeting of the Spine Society of Europe, where the certificate, together with the cheque, will be presented to the authors.

Who makes the decision?

The award paper is selected by an interdisciplinary committee from the Editorial and Advisory Board of the *European Spine Journal*. The persons on this committee are Anne F. Mannion, BSc, PhD (Zürich, Switzerland), Sally Roberts, PhD (Oswestry, United Kingdom), Max Aebi, MD, FRCS(C) (Montreal, Canada), Kjell Olmarker, MD, PhD (Gothenburg, Sweden) and Hans-Joachim Wilke PhD (Ulm, Germany).

At this point, I would like to thank this committee for their efforts. It is not easy to decide on a winner, as there are always several papers that potentially qualify for the prize. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that, under the rules, a paper would not be eligible for the award if anyone on the committee was author or co-author of that paper. However, this limitation seems somewhat unfair, because it represents a disadvantage for the people on the Award Committee, who spend a lot of time and effort reviewing the papers. Therefore, the committee has been expanded for the upcoming awards

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to include the original reviewers of each submitted paper, who will also evaluate it according to a ranking system for the award. In this manner, the papers will be individually rated by the experts specialized in that specific topic and by an interdisciplinary committee, which guarantees an objective selection process.

The rating of the papers is determined by five criteria, which consider Originality, Soundness of Materials and Methods, Results, Quality of Presentation and Relevance.

Why an award for an already published paper?

This award aims, in contrast to other awards, to reward the entire process of publishing a paper, which is often a very lengthy process, requiring strong self-discipline. Papers will usually start with the idea for the study, and move on to securing support for employees and supplies, through to the planning and performing of the experiment and the evaluation of the data. Finally, writing up the work and presenting the message in a clear and concise form, with appropriate graphics/figures/tables, demands many further hours. After submitting the paper, it has to be defended against criticism from at least three reviewers, not infrequently resulting in a major revision of the paper. This usually leads to an improved paper, but again, it requires patience and endurance. Unfortunately, there

is currently a trend to split larger studies into “smallest publishable units”, in order that authors can produce the highest possible number of papers. The idea of this award, therefore, is to recognize one group of scientists each year for this huge amount of work and for the completeness of their presentation of an outstanding project.

Why an award for basic research?

Basic research is the essential prerequisite for progress in problems dealing with the spine. The *European Spine Journal* would like to encourage more authors from different non-surgical disciplines to submit high-quality papers to its journal. The definition of basic research is difficult, and depends much on the individual perspective. For the purposes of this award, basic science includes theoretical medicine, cell biology, microbiology, biochemistry, biomaterials, biomechanics, ergonomics, rehabilitation, psychology, etc.

Very often, the basic science disciplines have to perform their studies with limited resources. Salaries – especially for young scientists – are often very meagre. This award attempts to acknowledge their enthusiasm and idealism.

On behalf of the editorial board of the *European Spine Journal*, Springer, which publishes it, and the Spine Society of Europe, I would like to thank the companies GRAMMER

Office GmbH and GRAMMER AG for their generosity. They have committed themselves to continuing the sponsorship of this award in the forthcoming years.

The core competence of both companies is the development of ergonomic seating systems. GRAMMER Office GmbH produces chairs for the office, the home, event centres and airports. GRAMMER AG is an international company for driver seats, passenger seats and other automotive equipment such as headrests and armrests.

As they develop many products directly or indirectly involving spinal problems, GRAMMER maintains its own research facilities and is keen to take onboard recent research perceptions concerning spinal problems. With this GRAMMER award, these two companies would like to support successful basic spinal research and to help disseminate the latest scientific knowledge within industry.

Through this award, the *European Spine Journal* hopes to encourage more basic science research in the field of spinal disorders. This, together with the impact factor that was recently awarded to our journal, will hopefully attract spine scientists to submit even more high-quality papers to the *European Spine Journal*.

We are thus looking forward to receiving many outstanding papers from basic scientists all over the world who are conducting research on the spine. Basic science is the seed for the treatments of tomorrow.