Healthy competition: a guide to prizes and awards in the *MJA*

Recognition for individuals, and highlighting important causes in health

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Most of us who work in health and medicine don't expect a prize for what we do, but neither are we averse to a bit of competition. From the *MJA*'s perspective, the output of competitions — often comprising the most innovative and creative of submissions — makes for enriching content. Thus, in concert with a number of generous partners and sponsors, we have been building a collection of competitions that we offer throughout the year. Details of these can be found on our website (https://www.mja.com.au/author-centre/awards) and are briefly outlined below (Box).

As an academic journal, the *MJA* values and promotes original research that advances the evidence base for medicine. Thus, our richest and longest-running prize is the *MJA*, MDA National Prize for Excellence in Medical Research. Known from its inception in 1995 until 2009 as the *MJA*/Wyeth Research Award, and in 2010 and 2011 as the *MJA*/Pfizer Research Award, this prize is awarded to the authors of the best original clinical research article published in the *MJA* in each calendar year. In picking a winner, *MJA* editorial staff are ably assisted by the members of our Content Review Committee.

This year, another research prize — the *MJA* Prize for Excellence in General Practice Research, sponsored by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and MDA National — will be judged in a similar way by a panel including experts appointed by the *MJA* and nominees of the RACGP.

The Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Prize is now in its 10th year. Inspired by, and named for, the life, work and premature death of a young Indigenous GP, this competition has brought new and significant voices into the *MJA*'s dialogue on Indigenous health. The initial brief was an essay, but this has now expanded to include an artwork category. Entrants need to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who are working, researching or training in a health-related field, and the winning contributions, along with some notable runners-up, are published in the Journal. The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association provides judging and other support for this competition.

You may have spotted a number of excellent creative submissions in the "back half" of the Journal last year. These were courtesy of the *MJA* Dr Eric Dark Creative Writing Prize, sponsored by Varuna, the Writers' House. Named in memory of Dr Eric Dark, a GP and public health activist whose former home in the New South Wales Blue Mountains has been preserved as a writers' retreat, the competition attracted 110 entries from doctors and medical students in its first year. Last year's theme was "splendid isolation", and this year we are asking for entries loosely themed on what Dark said was one of the essential ingredients for human health: "there must be joy".

Another award inaugurated last year was the *MJA*, MDA National, Nossal Global Health Prize, and this also includes both practitioner and student categories. Entrants need to write an essay on a specified topic of global health importance, using a story or example from their own experience of working in a resource-poor setting. The theme for this year, provided by our friends from the Nossal Institute for Global Health who also help judge the prize, is "leadership in global health".

We hope you have enjoyed reading the outstanding entries in our competitions in the past, and that you will consider throwing your hat into the appropriate ring at some time in future. While we can only agree with Theodore Roosevelt that "Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing", a bit of recognition and some healthy competition never go too far astray. ❑

Medical Journal of Australia* competitions with prizes to be awarded in 2013

Competition name	Specifications	Closing date
The *MJA*, MDA National Prize for Excellence in Medical Research	The best original clinical research article published in the *MJA* in the preceding calendar year	31 December 2012
The *MJA* Prize for Excellence in General Practice Research, sponsored by the RACGP and MDA National	The best original general practice research article published in the *MJA* in the preceding calendar year. Must include at least one GP researcher	31 December 2012
The Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Prize	Narrative-based essay (up to 2000 words) or original artwork by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is working, researching or training in a health-related field	6 May 2013
The *MJA* Dr Eric Dark Creative Writing Prize	Creative writing submission (up to 1500 words) in two categories: doctors and medical students	2 April 2013
The *MJA*, MDA National, Nossal Global Health Prize	Narrative-based essay (up to 1200 words) based on an experience of working in a resource-poor setting in two categories: doctors and medical students	14 June 2013

RACGP = Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.
* See also https: //www.mja.com.au/author-centre/awards/ ◆