

Award Guidelines

The South African Medical Research Council strongly supports excellence in health research and has established a set of Awards to recognise world-class science. The Awards are open to South African citizens and Permanent Residents who meet the award criteria and are eligible to be nominated.

The Main Award Categories are as follows:

- 1) Platinum Lifetime Scientific Achievement Award
- 2) Gold Scientific Excellence Award
- 3) Silver Scientific Achievement Award
- 4) Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award
- 5) Public Health Implementation and Impact Award
- 6) Bronze Scientific Achievement Award
- 7) Emerging Researcher Award

Special Awards

The SAMRC President, the SAMRC Vice President and/or the SAMRC Awards Selection Committee may make Special Awards to recognise exceptional achievements and contributions to South African health research or the support of health research. One example is the SAMRC President's Award for Exceptional Contributions to Health Research, which is made at the discretion of the SAMRC President.

Special Gold Awards

In addition to the Gold Awards to honour scientists who are South African citizens and Permanent Residents, the Awards Selection Committee may award Special Gold Awards to the following scientists who meet the criteria for the Gold Award:

- a) An African scientist (from any country in Africa other than South Africa) who has significant collaborations with South African scientists and who has made significant contributions to health research in South Africa and on the continent.
- b) An international scientist (from anywhere in the world other than Africa) who has significant collaborations with South African scientists and who has made significant contributions to health research in South Africa and on the continent.

1. Award Categories

1.1 PLATINUM LIFETIME SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Platinum Award is for outstanding, accomplished scientists who have raised the profile of South African science and helped build the foundations of health research in the country for future generations. They should be scientists who have made seminal scientific contributions and who have also made an impact on local and/or global health and/or health policy and/or clinical practice that impact on the health of people, especially those living in developing countries.

Criteria for the Platinum Award:

- a) **Exceptional Scientific Accomplishment:** At least one exceptional scientific accomplishment, breakthrough or contribution to research which is acknowledged at national and international level, (within the last ten years).
- b) **Meritorious Contributions to Health Research:** Meritorious impact to enhancing the prestige of South African health research and/or extending health knowledge (Policy Impact and/or global health and/or health policy and/or clinical practice).
- c) **Research Outputs and Citations:** At least 100 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates (≥ 500 -1000) and 15 First/Last authorship over the course of a lifetime in health research; **OR** At least 15 publications in a high-impact factor journal (≥ 15); **OR** 3 Patents/Software/Innovation products.
- d) **National and International Committees:** Serve on national and international committees,

- panels, advisory groups and working groups in their field of research.
- e) **Recipient of Prestigious Awards:** Recipient of prestigious and honorary awards that recognize scientific achievements.

1.2 GOLD SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE AWARD

The Gold Award is for established senior scientists who have made seminal scientific contributions that have impacted the health of people, especially those living in developing countries.

Criteria for the Gold Award:

- a) **Recent Exceptional Accomplishment:** A recent exceptional accomplishment, breakthrough, or contribution to health research (within the last five years) which is acknowledged at national and international level.
- b) **Research Outputs and Citations:** At least 50 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates (≥ 300 -500) and 10 First/Last authorship over the course of a lifetime in health research; **OR** At least 10 publications in a high-impact factor journal (≥ 15); **OR** At least 2 Patents/Software/Innovation products.
- c) **Demonstrated Research Impact:** Demonstrated impact of the research contribution on health in South Africa or globally (Policy Impact, local and/or global health and/or health policy and/or clinical practice).
- d) **Grant Funding/Writing:** Independently sourced grant funding (within the last five years) for their research work.

1.3 SILVER SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Silver Award is for early/mid-career scientists from either a MBBCh/MBChB background or from a PhD background. To qualify they must hold a PhD/MMed/FCP or equivalent. The award is for important scientific contributions made within ten years of receiving their PhD/MMed/FCP or equivalent qualification.

Criteria for the Silver Award:

- a) **Demonstrated Research Impact:** Demonstrated scientific contributions that impact the health of people, especially those living in developing countries (Policy Impact, local and/or global health and/or health policy and/or clinical practice).
- b) **National and International Acknowledgments:** Recognition at a national and international level (within the last ten years) for meritorious scientific contributions and/or advancing health knowledge.
- c) **Research Outputs and Citations:** At least 30 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates (≥ 200 -300) and 5 First/Last authorship over the course of a lifetime in health research; **OR** At least 5 publications in a high-impact factor journal (≥ 15).
- d) **Grant Funding/Writing:** Independently sourced grant funding (within the last five years) for their research work.

1.4 RESEARCH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION AWARD

The Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award is for established scientists who have made substantial contributions to capacity building and transformation in health research in South Africa.

Special emphasis is placed on:

- Promotion of doctoral degrees (PhD), student race and gender diversity in health sciences;
- Capacity development activities of emerging and early-career scientists;
- Research workforce development;
- And contributions to promoting capacity development at historically disadvantaged or under-resourced institutions.

The award is open to all eligible scientists who meet the stipulated criteria.

Criteria for the Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award:

- a) **Demonstrated Scientific Impact:** Contributions that impact the health of South Africans (Policy/societal/scientific impact and/or clinical practice).
- b) **Supervision and Graduation of Students:** Supervision and graduation of Masters' and PhD students, including designated groups, who are South African citizens/SA Permanent Residents.
- c) **Research Outputs and Citations:** At least 10 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates (≥ 50 -100) and 1 First/Last authorship over the course of a lifetime in health research; OR At least 1 publication in a high-impact factor journal (≥ 15).
- d) **Mentorship of Emerging Scientists:** Mentorship of emerging and early-career scientists through achievements such as placements, awards and training.
- e) **Mentorship for Grant Generation:** Development of emerging and early-career scientists to generate grants.
- f) **Research Workforce Development:** Demonstrated contributions to research workforce development of research managers, research assistants and other research support staff mentored by the nominee.
- g) **Transformation Contributions:** Demonstrated contributions to transformation by conducting their research at historically disadvantaged or under-resourced institutions or being involved in capacity development initiatives at historically disadvantaged or under-resourced institutions.

1.5 PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT AWARD

The Public Health Implementation and Impact Award recognises established scientists who effectively collaborate with public health stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders to translate research into tangible outcomes, improved clinical practice, or national health policy.

A special emphasis is placed on the successful operationalization of research in real world settings, the scalability of interventions, and demonstrable improvements in health service delivery that enhances the well-being of the South African population. The award is open to all eligible scientists who meet the stipulated criteria.

Criteria for the Public Health Implementation and Impact Award:

Scientists must demonstrate a direct contribution to closing the gap between research and real-world application. This must be supported by evidence that findings have been formally adopted or integrated into national, provincial, or institutional health protocols, guidelines, or operational frameworks.

- a) **Quantifiable Health Improvements:** Demonstrating measurable gains in health delivery, such as increased access to services, reduced disease burden, or enhanced cost effectiveness.
- b) **Successful Translation:** Demonstration of successfully bridging the translational gap by ensuring that innovative products, software, or diagnostic tools reach the intended end-users or clinical environments.
- c) **Scalability and Sustainability:** Successfully scaling a research-based intervention from a pilot study into a sustainable, large-scale programme or practice.

1.6 BRONZE SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Bronze Award is for emerging scientists who have between **5 to 10 years post PhD** experience. The award is not tied to chronological age, but scientists should preferably be **under 50 years** of age.

Criteria for the Bronze Award:

- a) **Leadership:** Demonstrated potential to become an established scientist, with distinct and evident scientific and leadership potential.
- b) **Capacity Development:** Graduated or currently supervising Masters' and PhD students.
- c) **Research Outputs and Citations:** At least 20 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates (≥ 100 -200) and 3 First/Last authorship over the course of a lifetime in health research; OR At least 3 publications in a high-impact factor journal (≥ 15).
- d) **Grant Funding/Writing:** Independently sourced grant funding (within the last five years) for their research work.
- e) **Transformation:** Demonstrated commitment to transformation by either conducting their research in historically disadvantaged or under-resourced institutions or being involved in capacity development initiatives in historically disadvantaged or under-resourced institutions.

1.7 EMERGING RESEARCHER AWARD

The Emerging Researcher Award recognises outstanding **early-career scientists** who demonstrate exceptional academic achievement, research excellence, and strong potential to become future leaders in health and medical research. The award is intended for scientists who are **under the age of 40** and have completed their PhD within the **past five years**. It aims to acknowledge and support scientists whose work contributes significantly to the SAMRC's vision of improving health outcomes and strengthening the South African health research ecosystem. Scientists should demonstrate excellence and exceptional promise appropriate to their career stage.

The Emerging Researcher Award seeks to celebrate young researchers who have excelled academically, demonstrated strong research productivity, shown promise as future research leaders, and made meaningful contributions to advancing health research in South Africa and beyond.

Criteria for the Emerging Researcher Award:

- a) **Academic Excellence:** Demonstrated outstanding academic performance throughout previous qualifications, including excellence in undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies, reflecting a strong foundation for a successful research career.
- b) **Research Outputs and Citations:** Evidence of exceptional research ability, demonstrated through a sustained record of scholarly outputs. At least 5 publications published in leading journals, with citation rates ($\geq 10-25$); **AND** 5 Peer-reviewed Conference presentations/Abstracts; **OR** 2 Book chapters; **OR** 5 Policy briefs and Technical reports; **OR** 1 Patent/Software/Innovative product; **OR** Other impactful research contributions relevant to health and biomedical sciences.
- c) **Research Potential and Emerging Leadership:** Demonstrated ability to conduct independent and innovative research, with evidence of emerging leadership through supervision and mentoring of students, peer support, capacity development activities, leadership roles, and active participation in national and international research collaborations and networks.
- d) **Recognition and Achievements:** Recognition through prestigious awards, scholarships, fellowships, invited presentations, professional appointments, or other indicators of excellence that demonstrate outstanding achievements and the potential to make a significant contribution to health research and innovation.

2. Nominations

- 2.1 Nominated candidates will only be considered if the completed nomination forms are submitted by the stipulated deadline.
- 2.2 A nomination will only be considered once both forms have been completed, signed, and submitted in the required sequence:
 - a) Nominator: Completes, signs, and submits the nomination form.
 - b) Nominee: Receives a unique link and completes, signs, and submits the nominee form.Only fully completed and signed submissions from both parties will be eligible for consideration.
- 2.3 Incomplete and inaccurate nomination forms will not be considered.
- 2.4 Only one nomination form will be accepted per nominee. Nominees must sign only the form completed by their preferred nominator and ensure it is submitted by the stipulated deadline.
- 2.5 The following individuals are not eligible to be nominated for an award:
 - a) Members of the Award Selection Committee;
 - b) Members of the current SAMRC Board;
 - c) The serving SAMRC President and SAMRC Vice President;
 - d) Immediate family members of (a) to (c) i.e., parents, spouses and children.
- 2.6 The following individuals may not nominate someone for an award:
 - a) Members of the Awards Selection Committee;
 - b) Members of the current SAMRC Board;
 - c) The serving SAMRC President and SAMRC Vice President;
 - d) Immediate family members of (a) to (c) i.e., parents, spouses and children.

3. Selection

- 3.1 The selection process is conducted by the SAMRC Awards Selection Committee, which includes the SAMRC President, a Board member, the Vice-President, one past recipient of an SAMRC Award, and a well-established senior scientist who is not employed by the SAMRC.
- 3.2 The deliberations of the Awards Selection Committee are confidential. Award recipients are selected at the discretion of the Committee, taking into consideration both quantitative and qualitative measures.
- 3.3 The Awards Selection Committee may decide to make an award that is different to that requested on the nomination form e.g. a nominee for the Gold Award may be re-assigned to the Silver or Platinum category.
- 3.4 The Awards Selection Committee may decide not to make an award in any specific category, or not to award in all the listed categories if there are insufficient suitable candidates.
- 3.5 The Awards Selection Committee is under no obligation to communicate with nominators or nominees regarding the outcome of the selection process and will not engage in any such correspondence.

4. Announcement of Award Recipients

- 4.1 The outcome of the selection process will be communicated to all successful nominees and their nominators.
- 4.2 The formal announcement will be made at the annual SAMRC Awards function and until such time the outcome of the selection process is to remain confidential. A press release will be issued following the Awards function and thereafter the list of Award recipients will be published on the SAMRC website.
- 4.3 A nomination can be regarded as unsuccessful if notification of the outcome of the selection process is not received from the SAMRC within three months of the nomination closing date.

5. Awards/Prize

- 5.1 Awards in the Platinum, Gold, Silver, Research Capacity Development, Public Health Implementation and Impact, Bronze and Emerging Researcher categories will include a trophy, certificate, and a cash prize:
 - a. R50 000 for Platinum Award
 - b. R30 000 for Gold Award
 - c. R15 000 for Silver Award
 - d. R15 000 for Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award
 - e. R15 000 for Public Health Implementation and Impact Award
 - f. R10 000 for Bronze Award
 - g. R10 000 for Emerging Researcher Award
- 5.2 Cash prizes are made to the primary institution/organisation that the Award recipient is affiliated with.
- 5.3 Awards in other special categories will include a trophy, a certificate and a cash prize at the discretion of the SAMRC Board.

6. Guidelines Relating to Award Progression

- 6.1 Awards are progressive, with the Platinum Lifetime Achievement Award being the highest and final SAMRC Award.
- 6.2 A recipient of an Award other than the Platinum Award may be nominated in a higher Award category after a minimum period of 3-years after receiving an Award in any lower category.
- 6.3 The 3-year restriction does not apply in the case of a previous recipient of Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze Award SAMRC Award being nominated for the Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award.
- 6.4 Recipients of a SAMRC Lifetime Achievement Award prior to 2013 are not eligible for consideration in any of the current Award categories.