

people



Dr. P. Raghu Ram

talks with *You & I*

You're the youngest doctor in the 508-year history of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (the oldest surgical college in the world) to have received their international gold medal. Congratulations! How does it feel?

I'm absolutely delighted. It has well and truly been a humbling and overwhelming experience to receive this most prestigious award from the President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The fact that I am the youngest recipient makes the Award even more precious and valued.

When the citation was being read out outlining my achievements at the awards function in Edinburgh, I was silently counting my blessings – I expressed my heartfelt gratitude to lord almighty for placing me at the right place at the right time, for making me do all the right things, and above all, for giving me the courage to practice ethically and change the things I could in a country that I was born and raised.

How prestigious is the award?

Hand on heart, I can confidently state that despite receiving numerous awards in the recent past, this particular award has been the most prestigious thus far. My contribution towards improving the delivery of breast healthcare in my motherland, and equally, commitment towards training and counselling budding surgeons and surgical trainees from the Indian subcontinent has been recognised by the oldest surgical college in the world. The fact that only a select few distinguished surgeons from across the world have been conferred with this award, speaks volumes of the prestige associated with it. I dedicate this award to my country, my patients and my family.

DOCTOR AMAZING

people

How did it come about?

One cannot self-nominate for this award and is not given every year. An awards committee carefully oversees identifying and selecting the appropriate surgeon world over for this award. I knew that my name was being considered when my curriculum vitae were requested by the Awards Committee in 2012. As the Committee unanimously felt that I deserved the award, my name was formally forwarded to the Governing Council of the Royal College for discussion. After deliberating on the merits involved, the council approved my award, once again unanimously.

Considering that this award is given to people more senior in age, what prompted the Awards Committee of the Royal College to nominate and choose you?

Achieving distinction in one's sphere of life and outstanding contribution to the Royal College are the two basic criteria that are assessed in decision making.

Giving up lucrative career opportunities in the UK; establishing the Indian subcontinent's first free-standing, purpose-built comprehensive centre for breast health; implementing innovative initiatives to empower people in India about importance of early detection of breast cancer; implementing meaningful, cost-effective breast cancer screening programmes in Andhra Pradesh in an effort to find Indian solutions to Indian problems; and pioneering efforts made to establish the Association of Breast Surgeons of India – the very first organisation in the country that represents surgeons practicing breast surgery all over in India were some of the achievements that the Awards Committee looked into while considering me for this honour.

I was singularly responsible for convincing the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh to conduct its Overseas Intercollegiate MRCS Examinations in Hyderabad. I convened the Examination in 2008, 2010 and 2012 - First time for MRCS Final Exams to be held in Andhra Pradesh in the 500 years history of the College.

Considering the facts outlined above achieved at a young age, the Awards Committee felt that age should not come into the equation in giving away the award. Hence, the Royal College has made an exception in bestowing this honour, making me the youngest ever recipient.

Tell us about your connection with the Royal College.

With a history stretching back five centuries, The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh is the oldest surgical College in the World. The College is recognised world over for its dedication to achieving excellence in surgery, training surgeons and setting standards. I therefore had a 'fire in my belly' to pursue FRCS and train at the World's best Centres of excellence in the United Kingdom whilst doing my Postgraduate training in General Surgery in Mangalore (1993- 1995).

I went to Edinburgh in 1996 in pursuit of my dream and experienced the coldest ever winter in that region (-19 degrees centigrade). By the grace of lord almighty and hard work, I obtained FRCS from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ireland in June 1997. Recognising my academic track record, the Royal College of Surgeons of England based out of London awarded me FRCS without sitting the Examination in 2010 making me one of the youngest in the world to obtain FRCS from all the FOUR Royal Colleges in the British Isles.

I wanted to give back my due to my Country and reach out to my younger Colleagues who for whatever reason cannot go to the UK to pursue a similar dream. I wanted to bring to India the RCS Ed Course that prepares doctors for the final component of the FRCS/MRCS and the MRCS Examinations to Andhra Pradesh. It gives me immense happiness that I have been successful in achieving both these goals. Hyderabad is now on the World map of the RCS Ed for having conducted the highest number of Final FRCS and MRCS Courses outside of the UK. I have convened the MRCS Examination on behalf of the RCS Ed on three occasions for the FIRST time in the history of the Royal College in Hyderabad (2008, 2010 and 2012).

Describe yourself in a few words?

I am hard-working and persevere at what I take up; striving for perfection. Serving people in my motherland and working with missionary zeal to improve the delivery of breast healthcare in India over the past five years has given me far greater satisfaction than the pleasure of having lived in the UK for well over ten. The lord has made me realise that there is no place in the world sweeter than Rome. I believe in the strength of a prayer; I am an ardent Shirdi Sai devotee. - as told to Anahita

“The Royal College has made an exception in bestowing this honour, making me the youngest ever recipient.”

