

Founders' Award

Dr. Akef El-Maghraby



The Founders' Award recognizes the vision and spirit of the ISRS' founders by honoring an individual who has made extraordinary contributions to the growth and advancement of the society and its mission.

Dr. Akef El-Maghraby is the founder and chairman of the Magrabi Eye and Ear Hospitals and Centers (32 total) in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Each year, this network of eye hospitals provides quality eye care to one million patients and performs over 120,000 sight-preserving surgeries. He has also founded seven nonprofit eye hospitals and centers in Bangladesh, North Yemen, Sudan, North Lebanon and Egypt. Treatment and surgery are available for poor patients in all these hospitals free of charge. Dr. El-Maghraby has supported the training of eye care professionals from the Middle East in his hospitals and centers, and has sponsored over 60 physicians and technicians from the Middle East and Africa for one or two-year fellowships in the United States and Europe. He also founded the Al Noor Foundation, the first nonprofit organization for the prevention of blindness in the Middle East.

Dr. El-Maghraby founded the Middle East Journal of Ophthalmology, which is the only peer-reviewed journal for ophthalmology in the Pan Arab Middle East and African regions. He also founded the Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology (MEACO, previously PAACO) and was its president for 18 years. He is now a MEACO Honorary President for Life. He is currently vice-president of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO).

Dr. El-Maghraby is a board member of many nonprofit organizations, including Egyptian Fund for Social Development, Future Foundation for Housing, British University of Egypt, Nile University of Egypt, and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Magrabi International College for Nursing. He is also chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Saudi Institute of Health Services (SIHS), founder and vice-chairman of EBSAR Foundation for Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired in Saudi Arabia, and founder of the Magrabi International Faculty of Nursing in Egypt, a nonprofit organization. His great concern for the prevention of blindness in undeveloped countries is obvious and also instrumental in the formation of the International Federation of Eye Banks. He personally donated six eye banks to different Arab and East European countries. He also endowed a professorship chair for the prevention of blindness at the Wilmer Eye Institute (Johns Hopkins University), where he is a former member of the Board of Trustees. It was on his initiative that the inception of the annual International Blindness Prevention Award of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) was realized.

Dr. El-Maghraby played an important and significant role in transferring new technologies in ophthalmology from western countries to the Middle East, and he was the first to introduce intraocular lens implantation, phaco emulsification, refractive surgery, and the use of the excimer laser in the Middle East and Africa. He is now establishing the first subspecialty, nonprofit hospital in Yaoundé, Cameroon, for comprehensive ophthalmology and to train subspecialists from central African countries.

Dr. El-Maghraby has operated and lectured in 23 countries all over the world and has 29 publications to his credit. His many international awards and recognitions include, among others, the 1991 Edward Maumenee International Award, the 1994 Fellowship ad Hominem Award, the 1994 International Award for Excellence in Ophthalmology of the Royal Hawaiian Eye Foundation, the 1997 Shield for Outstanding Work in Humanitarian Causes from the Red Cross, United Arab Emirates, the 1998 Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Society of Refractive Surgery, and the 2000 Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Dean's Medal. He was chosen Physician of the Year in the Arab World by the International Public Opinion Association and was also awarded the AAO's international award for the Prevention of Blindness in 2002 and its Senior Achievement Award in 2003. Dr. El-Maghraby was decorated with the Lion Badge of Honor by the president of Senegal in 1993, the Order of Merit, First Degree by the president of Niger in 1995, the Order of Merit by the late king of Jordan in 1997, the Order of the Two Niles, First Degree, by the president of Sudan in 1998, and the Cedar of Lebanon by the president of Lebanon in 2001. He was decorated by the president of Egypt in 2003 and by the president of Tunis in 2003, and he was awarded the Golden Medal Award of the Algerian Ophthalmological Society in 2004.