



CoMSAA NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association

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COLOMBO MEDICAL SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
(CoMSAA)

FACULTY OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

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Editorial musings

It is an honour, a singular privilege and certainly a great pleasure, to present this Inaugural Newsletter of The Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA) to our members and other interested readers.

The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Colombo, also known as The Colombo Medical School, has a unique and proud history of 141 years. Up to just about a few decades ago, it was the only medical school in this resplendent isle. All medical doctors who qualified from Sri Lanka (or Ceylon, as it was then known) before 1967, simply had to be from the Colombo Medical School. In those halcyon days and for those alumni, it was not necessary to have an Alumni Association. They were an absolutely unique and exclusive lot. Quite a few of them have reached incomparable academic pinnacles of excellence and even made an indelible impact globally.

However, times have changed rather rapidly over the last five decades. Many other State Medical Schools have come into existence and now there are plans to initiate and propagate private medical schools in the country as well. In addition, there are a considerable number of Sri Lankan doctors who

have had their medical undergraduate education in institutions abroad. Our fair island is rapidly becoming a melting pot of a cosmopolitan admixture of the products of a very wide variety of undergraduate medical education programmes.

It has now become a rather belated necessity to have a conglomeration of a distinctive group of doctors in the country who could justifiably stake a claim to the magnificent legacy of the Colombo Medical School. These considerations were the compelling spurs to the initial steps towards the birth of the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA). It was born on the first day of July in 2011.

We are quite sure that many an alumnus would agree that all of us have a lot to be grateful to this magnificent institution that set us up in life. It is definitely like no other. We are known all over the world as the products of a splendid medical school and many a person has made a name for himself or herself, right round the globe, as a result of the basic medical training that was provided by our *Alma Mater*. Perhaps the least that this Mother Establishment could expect from its sons and daughters is to join CoMSAA and ensure that we take her from strength to strength.

We have just got going and it is our fervent hope that the alumni of the oldest medical school in the island and perhaps one of the oldest in the region would consider it a singular dispensation to be a part of CoMSAA. Literally and metaphorically, there are loads of them scattered in many areas of the globe and in every nook and corner of Sri Lanka. Our strength would be in our overwhelming numbers. For those of the alumni who have not yet been a part of it, this is a cordial invitation to join us and be an element of a giant venture to take that coveted legacy from here, to there and to eternity.

Dr. B.J.C.Perera - Editor

Dr. Chandra Jayasuriya – Assistant Editor

Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Welcome to this Inaugural Newsletter from CoMSAA.

Would you believe that our own Medical School is 141 years old and that it has over 6000 graduates registered with the Sri Lanka Medical Council at the present time? I believe that together we could develop into a formidable force to develop this association into one of consequence. There is much we could do, and even more waiting to be done.

As a first step, each one of us could spread the message and encourage fellow alumni to become a member of CoMSAA, access the website and the blog, and make a firm resolve to contribute to its development.

What have we achieved so far? We have a very active General Committee which has met on the first Wednesday of each month since our inaugural meeting in August 2011. We have opened a Bank account for the convenience of members. We have developed a CoMSAA logo with some interesting features and have posted a website and a user accessible blogsite. The membership drive is in

progress. Pending a permanent office room in the Faculty premises, we have been offered a very comfortable room in the refurbished Department of Anatomy in the “Block”. The Constitution is being finalized. A framework to develop a corporate plan has been drawn up and very soon subcommittees will be working on it to “add meat into the sandwich”. We also hope that this newsletter available electronically will receive wide coverage. I believe that the stage is set for “the games to begin”!

Frequently asked questions when I talk of CoMSAA include: “How can I join?” “How can I contribute?” “What benefit will I get?” and “Why should I join?” I will endeavour to answer only the first question. The website gives details regarding the payment and application form.

Besides strengthening our bonds, making contacts and developing our identity, our Faculty/Medical School needs us. It was voted as one of the leading Medical Schools in Asia and we need to help it to get back its status or to do even better. The students who enter it are amongst the highest scorers in the G.C.E. Advanced Level examination. The Faculty has highly talented teachers ably led by the Dean, Professor Rohan Jayasekera and researchers who are making a mark in the National and International arena. We also must not forget the hard working and often underpaid non-academic staff, who give the school the strong foundation on which it works.

Muhammad Ali was arguably the best sportsman we had during my younger days, probably the best boxer the world has ever seen. He was also known as the “Louisville Lip”. What is not so well known is his philanthropy and service to the less privileged. He is also a man of wisdom. His most famous quotes are the ones he produced off the cuff at press briefings and in the ring. I share with you one of his less known quotes which is appropriate and a good guide for our alumni:

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”

Muhammad Ali [*Cassius Clay*] (Born 1942); Boxer

It is purely voluntary and given from the heart.

It is my fervent hope that I would meet every one of the alumni during my tenure as President.

I wish you all a Happy New Year. I also wish every one of you good health, success and happiness, and above all, contentment in the years to come.

Deshamanya Professor A.H.Sheriffdeen

Emeritus Professor of Surgery

Founder President – CoMSAA

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011-2012

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Co-opted Members	: Dr. Philip Veerasingam Dr. Deepa Wimalasena

SNIPPETS FROM HISTORY

Colombo Medical School : The beginnings

In 1839, the Governor of Ceylon J. A. Stewart Mackenzie started sending Ceylonese students to Calcutta for medical studies to the oldest medical school in South Asia, The Bengal Medical College.

In the 1860s the Colonial Surgeon, Dr. James Loos was requested to report on the large depopulation of the Wannai. He recommended that medical facilities should be available throughout the island and to this end a medical school should be opened. The Colombo Medical School was thus opened in 1870 by the then Governor Sir Hercule Robinson. Dr James Loos was its first Principal. Dr. E.L.Koch was the second Principal in whose memory the Koch Memorial Clock Tower, which still stands, was built in 1881.

The beginnings of the medical school were modest. It was situated in the General Hospital Colombo, and had three teachers and 25 students. It offered a course of three years duration until in 1873 the course was extended to four years. Its progress was rapid. In 1880 the medical school was raised to the status of a college, renamed the Ceylon Medical College and in 1884 the course was extended to 5 years.

In 1875 Mudaliyar Samson Rajapakse gifted the land on which the present Faculty is located. Other philanthropists donated buildings at this site. These buildings are no more. The Anatomy block, built in 1913, is the oldest building now. In 1887, the Diploma of Licentiate of Medicine and Surgery (LMS) granted by the College became registrable with the General Medical Council (GMC) of the United Kingdom.

The Ceylon Medical College and the Ceylon University College, which had been established in 1921, formed the nucleus of the University of Ceylon, which came into being in 1942. The status of the Ceylon Medical College was elevated to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ceylon and the diploma of L.M.S. was replaced by the degree of M.B.,B.S.

Until it became the Faculty of Medicine, the Medical College was administered by the Civil Medical Department and its successor the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services. Dr. W.R. Kynsey served as Principal Civil Medical Officer (PCMO) between 1875 and 1897 and contributed much towards the college in its early years. Kynsey Road, which runs between the National Hospital and the Faculty, is named after him. In 1942 the Faculty of Medicine had six Departments - Physiology, Anatomy, Pathology, Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Surgery. Departments of Public Health (Community Medicine) and Forensic Medicine were added in 1949 and 1951 respectively. At present there are 14 Departments. The Departments of Biochemistry and Pharmacology branched off from the Department of Physiology, Parasitology and Microbiology from the Department of Pathology, and Paediatrics and Psychological Medicine from the Department of Medicine. There are 5 Units in addition to these departments - the Malaria Research Unit, the Human Genetics Unit, the Molecular Biology Unit, the Medical Education Development and Research Centre (MEDARC), and the Audio-Visual Unit. From 25 students in 1870, the student number increased to about 500 in the '60s and 1533 at present. The staff strength too has increased considerably.

Extracted from the web URL <<http://www.cmb.ac.lk/academic/medicine/history.html>>

Contents provided by Professor A.H. Sheriffdeen

ANECDOTES FROM THE PAST

“The Cultural Revolution”

The year was 1968 and the scene was a Bacteriology Tutorial.

A distinguished microbiologist from the Medical Research Institute (MRI) was extolling the virtues of a brand new but still experimental culture method for diagnosing TB. He said that the result would be available in just one to two weeks as compared to the standard method which takes a minimum of six weeks.

There was appropriately respectful and overawed silence from us students and then a wag from our group commented aloud “Sir, it is definitely a cultur(e)al revolution”.

Even the stern Hitler-type microbiologist laughed at this witty comment.

Provided by Dr. B.J.C.Perera

“The Startup Affair”

In 1939, Dr. C.W. Startup was nominated as Professor of Physiology and Registrar of the Ceylon Medical College.

He was not medically qualified and hence his nomination was greeted by howls of protest from all quarters. The choice was condemned at public meetings as well as in the State Council, Ceylon Branch of The British Medical Association, Independent Medical Practitioners’ Association and Ceylon Medical College Council. The controversy surrounding the appointment came to be popularly known as “The Startup Affair”. In spite of all the protests, Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott confirmed the appointment. When the College became the Faculty of Medicine in 1942, Startup ceased to be the Registrar but continued as Professor of Physiology.

His sartorial idiosyncrasies were rather amusing. He was invariably dressed in shorts and shirt. Just before a lecture, he wore a tie which he kept in his office and then donned an academic gown over this dress. This was indeed unusual attire for an academic at a time when a full suit was the order of the day.

Reproduced from *The Colombo Medical School 125 Anniversary Commemorative Volume*.

Permission obtained from the author, Dr. C.G.Uragoda.

Text provided by Professor A.H.Sheriffdeen.

NEWS & EVENTS

❖ The **Colombo Medical School Alumni Association** is now on the web. It is featured at two sites.

- The URL of the main site is www.comsaa.org/
- The location of a special blog is comsaa.blogspot.com/

Both sites come on top of the list if one Googles just the word **comsaa**

The main site was designed by Dr. Hemal Rupasinghe MBBS (Colombo), Intern Medical Officer.

He was responsible for the initial secretarial work of CoMSAA.

The blog was designed by Dr. Philip Veerasingam. It is monitored and managed by him.

❖ **Fellowship & Get-together**

It is envisaged to have a Scientific *cum* Social Event to celebrate the First Anniversary of CoMSAA around the latter half of 2012.

Please await further information via electronic mail and in our web site.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM OVERSEAS

Colombo Medical School Alumni Association is finally born : Alive and kicking now.

I read the letter from our Founder President of COMSAA, Prof. Sheriffdeen, highlighting some of the fond memories of the yester years and appealing to all the alumni to help foster the progress of this association. He also very briefly touched on the start of the association.

Let me at the outset offer our very best wishes to Prof. Sheriffdeen and the Executive Committee of the Association and sincerely wish every success in achieving all the targets and goals as stipulated.

It would be worthwhile to give some of the background information of some the efforts that were taken in the establishment of the Alumnii Association after all these years and to 'make a dream come true'. Let me explain.

Over the years, many requests had been made by Colombo Medical Faculty Deanery and Academic staff to individual doctors / Doctors Associations overseas in particular, to get financial and various other assistance to the Colombo Medical Faculty to enable the Dean & the Academic Staff to maintain and provide excellent training to the medical undergraduates. It is imperative that many alumni individually or collectively should have made substantial donations over the past years.

The 1960 medical batch had regular "batch get-togethers" and once again were organising their 50 years celebrations (since entry to the medical faculty in 1960) in July 2010 at Habarana in Sri Lanka. As a mark of appreciation and to show our gratitude to our Alma Mater, few of us wanted to use this opportunity to support our Alma Mater with some donations towards the educational and welfare needs of the medical undergraduates.

Three small groups took the initiative of raising funds purely on a voluntary basis to make a few essential donations identified by the Faculty Staff. A group led by Nanayakkara from UK, calling themselves “Nana’s mostly UK Group”, but with active support from several colleagues from USA and Australia also wanted to offer

- (a). essential text books for the Library and the various academic Departments and
- (b). raise funds for two medical student scholarships.

I must extend my sincere thanks to the support I received from M.G.S. Karunanayake and Udula Pathirans in the UK for helping out in all our efforts.

A small group led by Buddy Reid from Australia, calling themselves “Buddy Reid’s 1st Eleven”, raised funds to donate much needed essential equipment to the Physiology Laboratory.

A third group was led by Tissa Kappagoda from the USA and a few of his friends who agreed to donate five computers for the use of staff and the students in the Library.

We were fortunate to have the local support in Sri Lanka from a few of our batch mates, led by Nalini Rodrigo who took a lot of effort to co-ordinate the entire plan. As a result, we were given an opportunity to meet Prof. Harsha Senevirathna the Dean & the Senior Academic Staff and the Senior Library staff of the Colombo Medical Faculty and to make a formal presentation of our collective donations. We are so grateful to all those who supported us with all of their enthusiasm, encouragement and dedication to enable us to make these donations, to meet some of the pressing needs of the Faculty.

On that occasion, we felt the desperate need for the establishment of an Alumni Association which could provide collective or individual support and be a continuing source of effective and sustained assistance to meet the urgent and continuing educational and other welfare needs of the undergraduates & the academic staff, which would otherwise not be provided by the University or the Government.

Several of the batch mates (Sugee Ratnayaka, Tissa Kappagoda, Tilak Weerasinghe etc.) were saddened by the non existence of such an important association which we felt was essential and long overdue. Even though Colombo Medical School was the oldest, Peradeniya Medical School had already established an Alumni Association which appears to function quite well. We could not quite understand why the Alumni of the Colombo Medical Faculty did not consider the importance of such an association all these years.

Our sincere thanks must go to Prof. Harsha Senevirathna and his senior Academic Staff who responded to our appeal very favourably and took the initiative of re-organising a working Group to formulate plans to establish the Alumni Association. We are fully aware that some of the younger members of the Academic staff (Athula Kaluarachchi, Nalika Gunawardena and Piyusha Atapattu amongst them) were very enthusiastic, dynamic and supported Harsha and us in making our dreams come true. We are so elated that the inaugural meeting for the establishment of the Alumni Association was held on the 1st of July 2011, within a year of the initiative and the initial appeal. The rest is history.

We are also delighted with the members of the Founder Executive Committee led by Prof. Sherifdean who are still well respected and very efficient. We are confident that the newly established Association would provide much needed financial and any other donations from those Alumni who may be keen to

make any individual or collective donations to a well structured and legally protected Alumni Trust Fund. We do sincerely hope that any surviving Alumni, past present and future, would actively support the Association in whatever way they can.

For obvious reasons, the executive committee must be based in Sri Lanka. We as expatriates residing outside Sri Lanka are ready and willing to offer our support to the Organisers. We sincerely hope that the Alumni Association would encourage, foster and promote close relations between the Colombo Medical School and its Alumni, spread across the globe and amongst the alumni themselves.

Best wishes for all your efforts and wishing the Association every success in the future.

Dr. C.S.Nanayakkara
Consultant Paediatrician – UK

Editorial Note

It was lovely to receive this letter and we are delighted to publish it. Please also refer to the *Editorial musings* in this issue which is relevant to the sentiments expressed in this communication from a Founder Member from overseas. The Editorial Committee would be very happy to publish any type of communications from our overseas members in future issues. Bouquets and even brickbats are most welcome.

Dr. B. J. C. Perera
Editor – CoMSAA

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

NOMINATIONS FOR DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI FOR THE YEAR 2012

Nominations are called by the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA) for the award of Distinguished Alumni for the year 2012.

Distinguished alumni would be those who have made a significant contribution to medicine, research, national development, fields of fine arts and culture, sports and other pastimes or to the Colombo Medical School etc.

The nomination should consist of brief details of the nominee and his/her contribution to medicine. It should be proposed by an alumnus and seconded by another alumnus. Both the proposer and seconder should be members of CoMSAA. The nomination document should be less than 1000 words and should be accompanied by the *Curriculum Vitae* of the nominee, duly certified by the nominee. The nominee should also be a member of CoMSAA.

Direct personal nominations without a proposer and seconder will **not** be accepted.

All nomination documents should be in hard copy format and posted under **Registered Cover** to :-

The Secretary

Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA)

P.O.Box 271, Faculty of Medicine, Kynsey Road, Colombo 8. Sri Lanka.

The final deadline for submissions is 31st May 2012.

Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted or considered.

DISCOVER SRI LANKA

Adisham Bungalow, Haputale, Sri Lanka : A 'one-day trip' from Colombo.



'Adisham' is a beautifully preserved bungalow of the 1930s, built during the British rule of Sri Lanka. That was the time that the world was told that 'The sun never set on the British Empire'. This was long before the equally ridiculous claim of the Nazis of 'A Thousand year Reich'. 'Preparations for the construction of this dream house began in 1929. Sir Thomas Lister chose a far away location, a very peaceful site at Haputale, which is 5000 feet above mean sea level. Adisham Bungalow was built according to the Tudor style, and in the pattern of the Leeds Castle in Kent'. Click on the web-links below to see more details of its construction and use.

http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2008/1/23654_space.html

<http://www.visitslpc.com/city-a-regions/haputhale/adisham-bungalow.html>

Days open to the public and the cost of one day's stay.

The place is open for non residential visitors from 9 a.m – 4 p.m on Saturdays, Poya Days and School Holidays. The charge for staying in Adisham is around Rs.1000/- for a day, full board. The facility could provide accommodation for up to 35 persons. Telephone contact No. 057-2268030. For more details click on web-link below:-

<http://www.lakdasun.org/forum/index.php?topic=361.msg1319#msg1319>

Travelling from Colombo

The A4 highway from Colombo – Haputale. 175 Kms, Estimated duration of drive - Five hours

Haputhale to Adisham – Four Kms – Estimated duration of drive - 15 mins.

<http://maps.google.com/maps?f=d&z=13&q=Adisham+Bungalow%2C+Haputale%2C+Sri+Lanka@6.772166,80.931046>

Places of rest on the way

1. Paradise estate – 'French Restaurant' about a Kilometer past Kuruwita – 120 Kms from Colombo.
2. Belihul Oya Rest-house – 160Kms from Colombo.



The Belihul-Oya Rest house – Entrance and Veranda

The road from Colombo to Haputhale once you pass Kaluaggala, after you emerge from the Low-Level road (Orugodawaththe- Wellampitiya-Kaduwela-Hanwella) is super up to Haputhale(175 Kms). After passing Belihul Oya Rest-House at the 168/3 bridge you find the ‘Surathalee’ (meaning “female beloved” in Sinhala) waterfall. It is visible from the road but a short walk on a footpath gives one a magnificent view of it.



The ‘Surathalee’ waterfall

You turn left at the Beragala junction and climb up to Haputhale. It is really a fantastic sight on this stretch of the road. On a clear day you can see the water reservoirs of Udawalawe, Thanamalvila, Sooriyawewa and Chandrikawewa with the distant blue horizon of the Indian Ocean.



Two views on the road from Beragala to Haputale

A few hundred yards before the Haputhale town there is a road called Temple Road on the left exiting the highway at an acute angle. This passes the CTB Bus Depot. Take this road. About 2 Kms away is a turn off to the left leading to the Thangamalai sanctuary. You turn to this side road a few yards before the railway level crossing. This last 1.2 Km is motor able but is a clay track. This road leads to Adisham. You have to stop at the gate and buy tickets, around Rs. 30/- per person. It is a walk of about 300 yards from there to the Bungalow.

Once you are inside admire the beauty, serenity and silence of the place. Study the exterior of the building. Go inside and see what 'gracious living' was, around eighty years ago, in Ceylon. They sell jams and cordials made from the estate at a display counter. You could also pick up some post-card pictures and an audio CD about the history of the building. The best treat of all would be to sit in silence outside on the lawn and absorb the tranquility that Mother Nature provides in abundance here. The flowers, the cloud tipped mountains and valleys, and the profusion of a variety of birds from the 'Thangamalai Reserve' bordering this site. You will long remember this place for its incomparable memories.

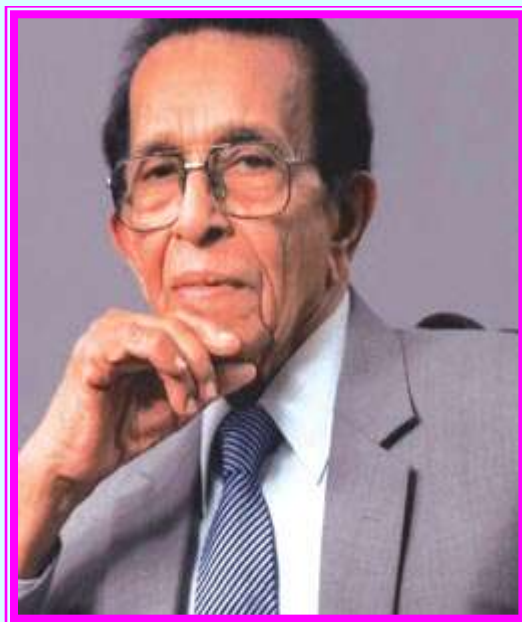
*'.....will flash upon your inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude'*

William Wordsworth

All contents were provided and produced by Dr. Philip Veerasingam

APPRECIATIONS

(1). Dr. P.R. Anthonis : A personal tribute



I came to know Dr. P.R. Anthonis, a great medical teacher and surgeon *par excellence*, when I was a medical student in the mid-sixties. Later in 1967, I was his intern medical officer for six months. During that very busy period of internship he gave a lot of responsibility to us, to which gesture we responded to the hilt. There were many VIPs in the paying wards but Dr. Anthonis gave the same attention to the patients in the non-paying wards as well. During this period, it became very evident to me that he was an energetic and technically competent surgeon and teacher/tutor who claimed that work “refreshed” him. This was perhaps the secret of his longevity.

Once an attendant came to him and asked him for a loan of a few hundred rupees as his mother had died. I was bemused when Dr. Anthonis gave him half the money and told him not to return it. I asked him whether he believed the attendant’s story and his reply was that he did not, but to have said that his mother had died perhaps indicated a dire need for the money and moreover, the mother cannot die twice!!!!. Such was his wisdom in mundane matters.

On another occasion I was assisting him in the operating theatre when a doctor came from the adjoining theatre and whispered something in his ear. He immediately went to the next theatre and returned about 10 minutes later. He did not tell us why he was called. I later met the surgical registrar who was in the next theatre and he told me that his consultant, a budding young surgeon, was doing a cholecystectomy and had inadvertently damaged an artery which resulted in severe bleeding. The young surgeon had panicked when he could not find the source of bleeding and had called for help. Dr. Anthonis had gone over, calmly sucked out the blood and located the bleeding point on the hepatic artery and stopped the bleeding. His humility and greatness were manifest in that he kept it to himself without embarrassing his junior colleague. “Never kick a fallen dog !!” was one of his mottos. I have watched him single-handedly place fledgling surgeons on sound footings.

The HOPE ship was berthed in Colombo during this time and the American surgeons were astonished by the surgical skills of Dr. Anthonis in performing various procedures on the gall bladder, liver, pancreas, stomach, spleen, kidneys, adrenals, urinary bladder, prostate, intestines and thyroid etc. An

overawed American surgeon told me that their surgeons usually specialised on only one organ. Many newly qualified surgeons followed his ward rounds and came in to operate on a side-table while Dr. Anthonis was doing a major operation on the centre table. We watched these junior surgeons gain experience on different operative procedures as Dr. Anthonis's unit was never short of clinical material. Furthermore, documenting all surgical procedures and detailing them with even line drawings were a unique trait in this brilliant surgeon's professional life. On Thursdays afternoons, a wide variety of short-eats were provided by him in Operating Theatre C. Young doctors and medical students who were not working with him also used to come to enjoy and savour the spread!!.

Dr. Anthonis was the patron of the medical students Buddhist Hostel, Jeevaka, for many years. I am personally aware that he donated furniture etc, when the need arose. He has assisted numerous medical students with books, stethoscopes and finances. His intellectual skills were all embracing. Before visiting a historic or tourist resort, he would read about it and even educate another tourist and even the tourist guides during these sojourns.

His influence was considerable, not only in the surgical field but also in historical scholarship. He was a veritable storehouse of information as to what happened, when, where and why. More recently, when a younger colleague was writing a book about the history of paediatrics in Sri Lanka, I took her to meet Dr. Anthonis. After listening to her, he meticulously selected many invaluable articles from ancient documents in his vast collection, which ultimately enriched and embellished the book she wrote. We watched in amazement as he remembered exactly where the information was stored and from which shelf it could be retrieved. He was equipped with this ability to recover data, sans computers, at the ripe age of 97 years.

After my early days under his tutelage, although I specialised in paediatrics, we remained in constant touch with him. My wife and my children also had the privilege and honours of being enriched by his company at many a social gathering. I participated at his retirement function in 1971 and thirty seven years later, I was delighted and filled with emotion when my former teacher, Dr. P.R.Anthonis, attended my own retirement function and unveiled my portrait at Lady Ridgeway Hospital. Sadly, he just failed to reach his one hundredth year on earth by a mere 35 days. However, his was a spectacular life, lived to the fullest, in the truest sense of the phrase.

Dr. Anthonis was definitely a unique person. Extremely skilful in his chosen specialty, superlatively knowledgeable in many a diverse topic, sober in habits, deeply religious and extremely humble. He rivalled all others of his time with distinction and vigour. He is by far the greatest medical personality that I have come across in Sri Lanka, and for that matter, elsewhere as well. Undoubtedly, he is one of the most notable and famous alumni of the Colombo Medical School.

May he attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana, via the shortest route through Sansara.

Professor Sanath P. Lamabadusuriya MBE

Emeritus Professor of Paediatrics, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

(2). Deshamanya Dr. S. Ramachandran

DSc(Honoris Causa), MD, FRCP

A man of rare distinction



Dr. Surendra Ramachandran, the renowned Consultant Physician and an icon of the medical profession, passed away recently. During a lifetime of service, he made a colossal contribution in several fields such as medical education, medical research, patient-care and in several medical associations.

His fellow medical students had several names for him such as Rama, Suren and 'Therium'. He acquired the last one because he had a photographic memory. He would read chapters of medical textbooks, close the book and say "*therium*", which in his native Tamil language means "I know". Indeed, whenever Rama was put to the test at examinations or in private conversations, he clearly demonstrated that his self-evaluation of '*therium*' was beyond any reasonable doubt. His outstanding undergraduate academic record included passing his 2nd MBBS, 3rd MBBS and Final MBBS with First Class Honours, 8 Distinctions, 4 Medals and the Perry Exhibition for the best performance at the Final MBBS Examination 1956 - 1958. This truly is a unique record in the annals of the University of Ceylon.

His postgraduate achievements of excellence included numerous Fellowships and honours. A total commitment to research over a period of around three decades resulted in a large number of scientific papers being published in reputed indexed journals. These efforts covered several fields which included extensive work on nephrology, malaria, typhoid, diabetes, alcoholism, geriatric medicine, hepatic amoebiasis and leptospirosis. These deserve special accolades as they were undertaken at a time when there was hardly any funding for medical research. He had to finance his research from his own earnings. The crowning glory of an unmatched career in research was the fact that Dr. Suren Ramachandran was awarded no less than 14 Scientific Orations in Sri Lanka and invited to deliver as many as 12 Guest Lectures abroad. This is an achievement that is unique and perhaps quite hard to match. However, he wore that superlative crown with distinction and humility.

Dr Ramachandran taught and examined students in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ceylon for 17 long years. His students often spoke of the quality of his teaching in glowing terms. Most of his trainees and registrars have held or now hold, prestigious consultant posts in Sri Lanka and abroad He served on many Academic Boards and participated in very many international meetings. He delivered

several prestigious orations in Sri Lanka and these were of sterling quality and significant importance. The setting up of the first kidney unit in Sri Lanka with facilities for haemodialysis and the setting up of the Medical Intensive Care Unit at the General Hospital Colombo were largely due to his efforts. These Units were constructed entirely with public funds.

In 1997, Dr. Ramachandran was the President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA). During his tenure of office he rendered sterling service to the medical profession with the extension to Wijerama House, the refurbishment of the existing building and the Lionel Auditorium. He also inaugurated the "Foundation Sessions" of the SLMA during his tenure of office.

He also held many other prestigious posts such as The President, Ceylon College of Physicians, Member of the Sri Lanka Medical Council, Member of the Board of Study in Medicine in the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine and Member of the Board of Management of the Colombo Nuclear Medicine Unit. Rama had the courage of his convictions and nothing could weaken his resolve. When he was at the helm he was a benevolent dictator.

Dr. Ramachandran and his charming wife Nirmala, had a happy married life for over 50 years. Rama and Nimmo first met when they were children during the Second World War. They became neighbours in Colpetty and fellow-students in Ladies College. Nimmo was indeed a pillar of strength to Rama in all his activities. Likewise Rama always supported Nimmo in her own ventures such as the three well researched books on Hindu Heritage and Hindu Legacy, which she authored. Rama handled the organisation and launch of these books with love and exemplary efficiency. Nirmala and Rama have a son, Sudarshan, who is a Consultant in Metabolic Medicine in the United Kingdom.

Rama was undoubtedly an artist *par excellence* as well. Single handedly, he produced the decor for the prestigious Medical Dance of the Sri Lanka Medical Association on at least two occasions. His budget allocation was very small but he converted the Lanka Oberoi Grand Ballroom into a spectacular showpiece on all these occasions. The Academic Gown of the College of General Practitioners was designed by Rama and for the past 32 years the Family Physicians have proudly worn this at their ceremonial functions.

In recognition of his immense services to mankind, the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka honoured him with two National Awards. They are the titles of the acclaimed *Deshabandu* in 1990 and the ultimate tribute of *Deshamanya* in 1994. These were undoubtedly well deserved accolades presented by the state to a man like no other.

Those of us who knew Rama will remember him as a man gifted with a superb razor sharp intellect, an unflinching positive attitude and a focused mind. To me personally, he was a loyal, dedicated, brilliant and gracious advisor and a very close friend for nearly fifty years

I am quite sure that all of us will miss him forever more.

Dr. Dennis J. Aloysius

Senior Family Physician

3). Dr. Narendradas Jayaratnam Walloopillai

MBBS, FRCP (Lond), FRCP Cardiology (Edin), FACC

A cardiologist *par excellence*



With deep sorrow I record the death of Dr N J Walloopillai who passed away in his 85th year, on the 6th of February 2011. This appreciation highlights some aspects of his life with special focus on his pioneering role in the Cardiac Investigation Unit and later in the Cardiology Institute of the National Hospital of Sri Lanka.

Dr Walloopillai was born to the influential and wealthy Velupillai family in Balangoda. He had his early education at St. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. It is interesting to note that when he was admitted to this school the Warden, Canon De Saram, changed the spelling of his name from Velupillai to Walloopillai saying that this was more user friendly. Consequently *Velu* became *Walloo*, a name his friends used when they addressed him.

Dr Walloopillai graduated from the Faculty of Medicine University of Ceylon in 1951. He proceeded soon after to the United Kingdom where he obtained his MRCP (Lond.) and MRCP Cardiology (Edinburgh) in 1954. He had his training in cardiology at Manchester.

On his return to Sri Lanka he was appointed Consultant Physician, General Hospital Jaffna and later assumed duties as the Physician-in-Charge of the Cardiac Investigation Unit, General Hospital Colombo. He had Dr Mahinda Weerasena, Consultant Radiologist in his team. I joined them a few months later, with the establishment of the Cardiothoracic Unit. The three of us became very close friends and met frequently in our homes. Whenever I was away on leave *Waloo* would act for me in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit. When Dr. Ivor Obeysekera retired, Dr Walloopillai was appointed Physician-in-Charge of the Cardiology Institute.

During Dr Walloopillai's tenure, cardiology came into its own as a speciality in this country. The Coronary Care Unit (CCU) which was founded by him in 1975 was the only one of its kind in Sri Lanka. Apart from the Surgical Intensive Care Unit (SICU) there were no other Intensive units in this country at that time. A large portion of the adjoining Church land was gifted to the Cardiology Unit at the request of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. This enabled the Cardiology Unit to be expanded further.

Dr Walloopillai was President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association in 1980 and President of the Sri Lanka Heart Association for several years. In addition, he was the President of the Orchid Circle and in his beautiful home he had an exquisite collection of orchids which he tended with great care. He shunned large social gatherings, usually attending only those which he could not avoid. It is not generally known but despite his somewhat shy nature he was an active trade unionist and was the President of the Association of Medical Specialists. Dr. Walloopillai was always updating himself in Cardiology and was an avid reader of scientific journals even in his twilight years. His charming wife predeceased him. At his request, Dr N J Walloopillai had a private funeral.

I end this appreciation with the final message Dr Walloopillai left for us. It embodies his philosophy and views on life and death.

“When I am gone, release me, let me go, be happy that we had so many years.

I have given my love, you can only take my word.

But now it is time to travel alone to be at peace”.

Dr. A.T.W.P. Jayawardene,

Past President SLMA

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EDITORIAL REQUEST

This is a warm and cordial invitation to all alumni to send in their literary contributions to the Newsletter.

There are sections such as “Communications from Members”, “News & Events”, “News from Overseas”, “Anecdotes from the past” and “Snippets from Leisure Activities” which could accommodate a plethora of contributions from the alumni.

The next Newsletter would be published in August 2012.

This is your Newsletter. Please feel free to add your literary talents to adorn it further. Kindly send them to <comsaa@rocketmail.com> or <bjcp@ymail.com>

The Editorial Team

The End
