

COMSAA NEWSLETTER



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CoMSAA Inter-Batch General Knowledge Quiz-2018

Photography by [Sandeep Weerasinghe]

Association of Medicine & Pharmacology

FACULTY of MEDICINE
University of Colombo

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President's Message 2019

It is a privilege to be elected as the 8th president of the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA) and I thank the membership for bestowing this singular honour on me. My council and I, along with the support of the membership, undertake to fulfil the objectives of the CoMSAA and to take it to even greater heights during 2019.

The outgoing president, Prof. Jennifer Perera, deserves a special thank-you for her able leadership in guiding the CoMSAA through the many activities during her tenure - such as continuing the financial assistance for the needy students and other student development projects.



I am indeed fortunate to have a dedicated, competent and accomplished team as my council and I am confident that together we will be able to achieve the goals of the Association during this year.

Our Alma Mater, the Colombo Medical School, will celebrate 150 years of existence in the year 2020. CoMSAA intends to be involved in many of its celebratory activities. As in the past, the CoMSAA lecture, the 3rd in the series, was held on 29th of March at the Faculty. The much awaited CoMSAA reunion, including the academic programme, will be held on 7th and 8th September and I urge all members to actively participate in this annual get together. Further, we hope to continue holding the 'peduru party' with the participation of Alumni members and medical students too. Please do join us for an entertaining evening of song and fellowship and bring your family members as well to enjoy this evening. We will soon inform you the details, including the date, of this event. We will also continue holding the "Inter Batch General Knowledge Competition". The calendar of events for 2019, encompassing these details, will be forwarded to all the members via email, very soon, and again, I do hope you will reserve the dates.

I would like to extend my deep appreciation to the members of CoMSAA for the solidarity, support, and commitment given over the years that have ensured the successful continuation of our Association. The contributions from the members towards student development projects in the past are gratefully acknowledged and I hope they will be even greater this year. It is my sincere wish that all the members, including those who are overseas, participate more effectively in the activities that have been planned for this year as it is the members who are our greatest asset.

I wish you all a peaceful, healthy and a happy 2019!

Iyanthi Abeyewickreme

CoMSAA Activities

Scholarships, Donations and Projects

Student Scholarships

CoMSAA sponsored a total of nine scholarships for needy students in the year 2018. Additionally, a further nine scholarships are currently being coordinated by CoMSAA through funds received from the Professor Stanley Wijesundera Financial Assistance Scheme, SLMDA-UK/CoMSAA Scholarship, Ms. Sumi Moonesinghe Bursary, Mr. Ajith Gamage Scholarship and the Batch of 75 Medics (1975 Alumni Group) Scholarship. We greatly appreciate the continued support and generosity of our contributors in this worthy endeavor.



Book and Stethoscope Donation

Last year, thanks to the generosity of its members, CoMSAA was helped to help a large number of students through its book and stethoscope donation campaign. We invite the CoMSAA membership to support us again with this project in 2019. For further information please contact Dr Sumitra Tissera or Dr Gayani Ranaweera at comsaa2011@gmail.com.



Girls' Hostel Project



Increasing hostel accommodation for female medical students has become a dire need. The number of girls entering the Colombo Medical Faculty has been steadily rising over the last few years, and at present the number of female students in the faculty exceeds the number of male students. The current girls' hostel is located at De Seram place. Due to the recent increase in numbers, our female students are also currently occupying one block of the Bloemfontein Hostel. As a result of the lack of hostel facilities, many female students are being forced to stay in boarding houses close to the faculty and are facing many financial and social difficulties. CoMSAA has taken the initiative to launch a Girl's Hostel Project with the aim of acquiring a suitable property in close proximity to the faculty to establish a new girls' hostel. For further information on the Girls' Hostel Project and how you can help, please contact us at comsaa2011@gmail.com.

CoMSAA Awards

Sumi Moonasinghe Award 2018

This year's recipient of the Sumi Moonasinghe award was Ms KAH Piyatissa of the AL 2015 batch. This award, established by Ms Sumi Monnasinghe, is presented to the student who performs the best at the Introductory Basic Sciences Stream examination. It consists of Rs50,000. The award was presented at the Commencement Lecture held for the new entrants to the faculty on 5th November 2018.



Walter Patrick Award for Excellence in Community Medicine



The Walter Patrick award is an annual award of Rs20,000 to the best performer at the first examination of Community Sciences Stream. The awardee for the year 2018 was selected by a panel of three members headed by Prof. Upul Senarath (Chairperson-Community Sciences Stream) and was decided based on the results of the assessment I in the Community Sciences Stream. The recipient was Miss L Yogarajan of the A/L 2014 batch and it was awarded by the CoMSAA president at the 80th executive committee meeting held on 28th September 2018.

Pramilla Senanayake Award for Excellence in Sports

The first Sports Excellence award was presented to Mr. Thilina Egodage, a fourth-year medical student, who had excelled in Chess, Karate and Magic at the Annual CoMSAA Reunion held on 9th September 2018 at Vivanta by Taj. Thilina's talents as a magician got him to the final round of the Sri Lanka's Got Talent competition on Sirasa TV.



The Annual CoMSAA Conference and Reunion

The 7th Annual Academic Sessions and the Reunion was held on the 8th and 9th of September 2018 at Vivanta by Taj, Bentota. One hundred and seventy members and their families participated. It was a lovely weekend of fun and fellowship that reawakened many memories of faculty life and raised Rs 500,000 for future CoMSAA activities.

The weekend commenced on the 8th evening where the alumni and their families sang and danced to the music of "Sax with Vajira". The band was sponsored by Dr. Christo Fernando.

The Chief Guest for the Academic Sessions was Emeritus Professor Harshalal Rukka Seneviratne, former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo. Professor Seneviratne spoke on the positive changes that have been made in the Colombo medical curriculum and emphasized the important role of the alumni and the academics in order to make the Colombo Medical Faculty a "trail blazer in medical technology", not only locally, but also internationally.



Prof. Jennifer Perera, who wore two hats as the President of 2018 CoMSAA as well as the Dean of the Faculty, spoke on the activities conducted by the association to uplift the teaching and learning environment of the Faculty and presented the initiatives taken so far by the Faculty to improve research, publications and other infrastructure facilities.

The academic programme comprised a series of interesting invited lectures. Dr Mahanama Gunasekera spoke on "Bird watching and interesting behavioural patterns of birds", Dr Ranil Jayawardane highlighted the importance of reading food labels, while Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa spoke on "Being present".





The academic programme concluded with an exciting and thought-provoking debate titled "Career is more important than family to be more successful in life" which was chaired by Drs. Sarath Gamini de Silva and BJC Perera. The topic was proposed by Dr. Dilhar Samaraweera and Dr. Sumudu Edirisinghe and opposed by Dr. Paba Palihawadana and Dr. Sumithra Tissera. Following evidence-based, heated arguments, well presented by both sides and thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, the opposing team emerged as winners of the debate.



The social programme

An exciting and entertaining afternoon with music was provided by the band 'Fantasy' which was sponsored by Dr. K. Rajendra



Thilina Egaodage, one of our medical students enthraling the audience with a rubric cube performance



The 'male models' ready for the cat walk



Strutting down the runway



Balancing the pole



Dancing under the bar for the lovely ladies. They showed off some great moves.



Raffle draw with prizes galore



A challenging quiz



Baila dancing competition



Enjoying the music

CoMSAA General Knowledge Quiz

The CoMSAA General Knowledge Quiz was held on 5th October 2018 at the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo. Dr Sameera Gunawardane and Dr Madhuka de Lanerolle Dias were the quiz masters for the evening. Six all male teams representing the current batches in the faculty competed in this lively and entertaining event. The A/L 2011 batch emerged as champions. The prizes and necessary equipment were provided by Alumni member Dr. Dayan Rajapaksha, CEO of ESOFIT.



CoMSAA Lecture 2019

Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala is the first Sri Lankan, and first Sri Lankan woman to summit Mount Everest (8,848m/29,030ft), a double record she achieved at 5:03am on 21st May 2016. She is a mountaineering professional and women's rights advocate. Her passion for adventure is balanced with her passion for gender equality. Since 2003, she has been professionally involved with the sport of rock climbing as an instructor, while simultaneously working full-time as a women's rights advocate. Jayanthi is currently serving as the first ever Goodwill Ambassador for Women's Rights for the Ministry of Women's Affairs.



Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala graciously accepted CoMSAAs' invitation to be a guest speaker on the 29th of March 2019. Her presentation took the audience through a journey to the top of the world and back, focusing on key life-changing experiences that she had encountered during her challenging and unforgettable journey to the summit of Mount Everest. Her presentation focused on the importance of dreaming big and the equal importance of nurturing a dream. It also focused on the effectiveness of planning, preparation, and teamwork required to achieve one's goal. The presentation highlighted the importance of changing and adapting to new environments and the critical role that a positive mind can play. It focused on how and why one needs to believe in oneself in order to achieve one's goals,



because, being passionate about what one does is critical to what can be achieved in whatever one undertakes. The presentation concluded by drawing out the gendered implications of this journey and how critical it is to challenge gender stereotypes and eliminate discrimination based on gender so that future generations of women and girls, men and boys, can enjoy the benefits of mutual respect and equality.

A link to the video of this year's CoMSAA lecture will be uploaded to our website shortly.

Up-coming CoMSAA Activities

8th Annual Academic Sessions & Reunion

7th & 8th September 2019

The Blue Water Hotel & Spa, Wadduwa



**Colombo Medical School
Alumni Association (CoMSAA)**



Fun filled reunion evening

7th September, 8.00 pm at The Sea Scape

Academic Sessions

8th September, 8.00 am - 4.00 pm at The Sea Scape

Conference Tickets (8th September)

Conference without Breakfast Rs. 3900.00

Conference with Breakfast Rs. 4400.00

(for guests coming on the 8th)

Transport (for the 8th) Rs. 600.00

(Faculty of Medicine to Wadduwa & back)

7th September

Half Board Rates

Single Rs. 19 600.00

Double Rs. 22 190.00

Triple Rs. 25 200.00

For more information/ room booking contact

Dr. Sumithra Tissera 077 2 532 184

Dr. Gayani Ranawera 077 2 987 981

comsaa2011@gmail.com

150 Year Anniversary Celebrations

Our faculty will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in the year 2020. Having spanned across three centuries, we have many facets to celebrate. CoMSAA will join the current staff and students to commemorate this great event.

Many activities have been planned in conjunction with the 150-year celebrations, including:



வெடி விமக மகிம

ஒரு மருத்துவ பீடத்தின் மேன்மை

The Glory of a Medical School

Commencement of 150th year and raffle draw - The anniversary year celebrations will take off with a raffle draw organized by the Medical Exhibition Committee. Attractive prizes are on offer and all proceeds will go towards the 150 year anniversary celebrations.

Book Launch - A special anniversary volume highlighting the history of our faculty over the last 150 years will be launched.

International Medical Congress - A scientific congress celebrating the rich and distinguished legacy of our faculty and showcasing the contribution, achievements and eminence of alumni near and far, will be held from 12th - 15th February 2020.

MediVision 2020 - A medical exhibition for the general public, especially targeting school children, will be held in the Faculty premises from 27th March to 4th April 2020. The exhibition will focus on health promotion and health education while showcasing the contributions and achievements of our faculty over the last 150 years.

CoMSAA invites it membership to join in celebrating this momentous event. For further information on how you can get involved in and support our faculty please contact us at comsaa2011@gmail.com.

From the Editors

How Authentic are You?

Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa, Professor in Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo

Dr Harshima Wijesinghe, Lecturer, Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo

Authenticity is a highly valued quality. We prefer not to associate people who are false. It makes us feel disconnected from them, at best, and manipulated, at worst. On the other hand, we do like people who are genuine and authentic. Our relationships with them feel secure.

We tend to think that an authentic person is one who speaks and acts in a way that is aligned with his/her beliefs, despite taking a stand contrary to popular opinion at times. However, authenticity is much more than being aligned in speech, behaviour and thought.

The core of authenticity is the character of the person. In many schools of psychology, authenticity is considered the pinnacle of psychological maturity and the cornerstone of psychological well-being. Departures from authenticity are seen as increases in psychopathology. Authentic people possess a number of qualities that indicate they are psychologically well-functioning (Joseph, 2016):

1. Have a realistic view of reality
2. Are accepting of themselves and of other people
3. Have a non-hostile sense of humour
4. Are able to express their emotions freely and clearly
5. Are open to learning from their mistakes
6. Understand their motivations

Authenticity

Know
yourself

Own
yourself

Be
yourself

If behind what a person says and does is a defensive and self-deceptive approach to life, then no matter how passionate and committed they are to a cause, ultimately they are not being true to themselves, and as result are not psychologically well-functioning.

Happiness is when
what you think,
what you say and
what you do are in
harmony

Mobondas Gandhi

How authentic are you? Take the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al. 2008):

Rate yourself in a scale of 1 (does not describe me at all) to 7 (describes me very well).

1. I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular
2. I don't know how I really feel inside
3. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others
4. I usually do what other people tell me to do
5. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do
6. Other people influence me greatly
7. I feel as if I don't know myself very well
8. I always stand by what I believe in
9. I am true to myself in most situations
10. I feel out of touch with the real me
11. I live in accordance with my values and belief
12. I feel alienated from myself

How to score?

The Authenticity scale comprises three subscales of:

1. Authentic Living – the extent to which one behaves in a way consistent with one's conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs and cognition
2. Self-alienation – the extent to which there is a disparity between conscious awareness and actual experience
3. Accepting External Influence – the extent to which one accepts the influence of others and the belief that one has to conform to them

Total items 1,8,9 and 11 for Authentic Living, items 2, 7, 10 and 12 for Self-alienation, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for Accepting External Influences.

Higher the score in Authentic Living, the more one is authentic. Lower the score in Self-alienation and Accepting External Influence, the more one is authentic.

References

- Joseph, S. (2016) *Authentic. How to be yourself and why it matters*. 1st ed. London: Piatkus.
- Wood, A. M., Linley, P. A., Maltby, J., Baliousis, M., & Joseph, S. (2008). The authentic personality: A theoretical and empirical conceptualization and the development of the Authenticity Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55(3), 385-399.

News from our Students: Medical Undergraduates Coming to the fore in Research

Dr. Sameera Gunawardena, Senior Lecturer, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo

The previous issue of the CoMSAA newsletter highlighted the establishment of the University of Colombo Clinical Society, which was a novel approach by the Colombo medical undergraduates to widen their horizons and enhance their skills. Continuing in that same momentum, two undergraduate projects gained recognition in scientific forums and competitions held during the past few months.

1. "Nephrosnap" - a mobile app for detecting levels of proteinuria

Prasan Warnakula and Prabuddhi Fernandopulle, two fourth year students of the Colombo medical faculty along with Vipulananda Pragatheeshwaran, a student of the University of Moratuwa developed a simple yet innovative tool to detect urine protein levels through a photograph taken by a mobile phone. This innovative app termed "Nephrosnap" won the championship at Brainstorm, the Premiere Biomedical Competition in Sri Lanka. This was the only submission by a medical school, and it was a proud moment for Prof Jennifer Perera, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Colombo who witnessed this competition.

This app was developed by Prasan and Prabuddhi during their electives program which was supervised by Prof Saroj Jayasinghe, Chair Professor of Medicine and Dr Nuwan Dayananda of the University of Moratuwa. In conditions like nephrotic syndrome, where daily monitoring of urine protein is required, Nephrosnap has the potential for providing a more accurate and earlier detection of relapse. The app uses an image of the heated urine to generate an objective grading of the level of proteinuria.

The Brainstorm competition, which was organized by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society (EMBS) Student Branch



Chapter at University of Moratuwa, was held at IESL Auditorium on 05th October 2018 with the presentation of around 30 new innovative products representing universities and other private institutions around the island. The young inventors are now keen to try out this new tool among patients and are seeking support to develop this project further into a marketable and productive venture.

2.Nomophobia - the latest ailment among medical students!

'No mobile phobia', nomophobia for short, is an irrational fear of losing access to one's smart phone. In a study among 150 medical students from the Colombo medical faculty it was found that all the students had at least mild forms nomophobia, while 1 in 10 showed signs of severe nomophobia. These were the findings of Jithmal Meegoda, Amanda Matharage and Yasas Mapa; three third-year medical students who along with their supervisor Dr N Gunathilaka, conducted this study as part of their Community Medicine Research project.

Going beyond the undergraduate scope of this project, these students presented their findings at the Annual Research Symposium of the Faculty of Medicine Colombo held in November 2018, under the title *"Prevalence of nomophobia and its effect on psychological well-being in smartphone using undergraduates of a selected medical faculty in Sri Lanka"*. Their efforts were duly rewarded by winning the third place in the Free Paper category.

Since then the students have already presented this study at several other local and international conferences including the Asia Pacific Medical Educational Conference (APMEC) organized by the National University of Singapore in January 2019 and the International Medical Undergraduate Research Symposium (IMURC) organized by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sri Jayewardenepura where they won first place under the mental health category. CoMSAA is proud to have partially supported them during their overseas travel.

Jithmal and his team are keen on expanding their study further and would also like to increase awareness regarding this growing health concern especially among the younger generations.



Members' Corner

Laughter; the best medicine

Humour in the bar (not that kind of a bar..., stupid!!!)

ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

ATTORNEY: When is your birthday?

WITNESS: July 14th.

ATTORNEY: Which year?

WITNESS: Every year.

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: I suppose so, but I am not sure whether you actually passed the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: He's 20, a number very close to your IQ.

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: By whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Take a guess.

ATTORNEY: Is your appearance this morning pursuant to a notice which I sent to your attorney?

WITNESS: No, this is how I dress when I go to work and attend important functions.

ATTORNEY: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All of them. If I try, the live ones would put up too much of a fight.

ATTORNEY: ALL of your responses MUST be oral, OK? What school did you attend?

WITNESS: Oral.

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 PM.

ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?

WITNESS: If not, he was definitely dead by the time I finished with him.

Rearranged by Dr. BJC Perera, of an e-mail sent by Prof Sanath P Lamabadusuriya

Some very famous absurdities

"I failed in the 8th standard" says Sachin Tendulkar, the great Indian cricketer.

"During my secondary school, I was dropped from the school basketball team" says Michael Jordan, the great American basketball player.

"I was rejected for a job in All India Radio because of my heavy voice" says Amitabh Bachchan, the famous Indian film star.

"I used to work in petrol bunks" says Dhirubhai Ambani, one of the richest men in India.

"I was rejected in the interview for the post of a trainee pilot" says Abdul Kalam, pioneering aerospace scientist and the late President of India.

"I didn't even complete my university education" says billionaire Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft.

"I used to serve tea at a shop to support my football training" says Lionel Messi, the Argentine football star.

"I used to sleep on the floor in a friend's room, returning Coke bottles for food money, and getting weekly free meals at a local temple" said Steve Jobs the Chairman of Apple Inc.

"My teachers used to call me a failure" said Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of England

Friends.., there are many such people who struggled..... BUT just see where they are now or what they became later on in their lives.

Life is not about what you couldn't do so far; it's about what you can still do. Wait, and don't ever give up. Miracles happen every day....

Sent by Dr BJC Perera

This is your Newsletter



Do you have an interesting story or anecdote from your time at the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo? We would love to hear from you and share it with our membership. Please send your contributions to the editors at comsaa2011@gmail.com.

Editors

Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa
Dr Harshima Wijesinghe