

# COMSAA NEWSLETTER



## CoMSAA Council 2019

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## CoMSAA President's Message - 2018/2019

I took over the presidency of CoMSAA last November and since then the time has passed swiftly. At the outset itself, I am happy to state that with the support of the council, we managed to address most of the objectives that we aimed to achieve this year.

Supporting the medical undergraduates of the Colombo medical school to pursue their studies was one of the important objectives that we strived to achieve during 2018/2019. I am pleased to announce that in this endeavour, we were successful in increasing both the number and the amount of financial assistance provided to needy undergraduates. This was possible due to the contributions from the council members and I gratefully acknowledge their generosity. I am also very happy to inform the members that the CoMSAA has negotiated with a donor who is set to offer scholarships for over 20 more students. With this successful negotiation, we have been able to increase the number of scholarships to nearly 40, a record achieved in 2019.

The Batch of '75, known as the 'Colombo '75 Medics', of which I am also a member, donated 20 stethoscopes to undergraduates who started their clinical training in late September 2019. I am thankful to my batchmates for this donation, which was gratefully appreciated by the students.

I believe the September 2019 reunion helped foster camaraderie amongst the alumni who attended while the scientific session was very much appreciated by those present at this segment of the event. It would have been even more interesting if more alumni attended the reunion. In this context, I hope that more alumni will join CoMSAA and participate in all the activities that are undertaken to further the interests of our alma mater.

As part of our social program, we had intended to organise a 'paduru party' in early June. However, given the unfortunate events that occurred on Easter Sunday, we felt that it was unsuitable to have such an event soon after.

As most, if not all alumni may be aware, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our beloved alma mater will be celebrated early next year. Activities planned include an exhibition, an international conference, an international medical student's quiz and also an anniversary souvenir. In addition to all this, CoMSAA has planned to publish a book of memoirs as a companion volume to the souvenir, with the intention of capturing the 'fun and 'crazy' days of medical school. I invite all alumni to contribute by sending anecdotal accounts you may recall from your days as a medical student. Even articles that have already been published in previous souvenirs, newsletters etc., are welcome. The co-secretaries of CoMSAA will email the details to members shortly, and I hope all alumni will contribute to this exciting venture.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with the 2018/2019 CoMSAA council. I take this opportunity to thank them all for their hard work, commitment and goodwill. We also had an enjoyable time during the council meetings, especially when planning for the reunion. In conclusion, I wish Prof Rizvi Sheriff, the incoming president and the 2019/2020 council, the very best in the coming year.

***Iyanthi Abeyewickreme***





## A Review from the Co-secretaries: CoMSAA activities 2019



Continuing from the previous years, the Alumni of the Colombo medical school has strived to do their part in uplifting their alma mater and making it a better place for the students and staff. Hence, the following is a summary of the activities organized by our alumni:

### 1. The CoMSAA Lecture

Continuing the tradition of the previous years, the 3rd CoMSAA Lecture, titled "Climbing your own Everest" was delivered by Ms Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala, the first Sri Lankan to set foot on Mount Everest. It was delivered on the 30th of March 2019. Ms Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala spent a very interesting, inspiring and educational hour with the present and past students of the faculty, and the staff members.



### 2. Student scholarships

This year, the monthly scholarship amount given through CoMSAA, to needy medical undergraduates of the faculty, was increased from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 4000. Compared to the previous years, the applications for CoMSAA scholarships increased by about eight-fold. This may have been due to the wider awareness of this worthy cause. Of the 97 scholarship applicants this year, 16 students were selected. These students would be provided with a stipend of Rs. 4000 per month, until they graduate. All these 16 scholarships were financed by CoMSAA council members. We are extremely grateful for their generosity.



### 3. Stethoscope donation

The annual stethoscope donation was carried out this year as well. This year, CoMSAA donated 20 stethoscopes for needy students of the faculty. The batch of '75 of the faculty, represented by Prof Harendra de Silva, Dr Kalyani Guruge and Dr Ananda Ranatunga, spearheaded a significant portion of this project.



### 4. Chairs for the student common room

CoMSAA donated 50 chairs for the student common room, which was a felt need by the students of all batches.



### 5. CoMSAA reunion

The highlight of the annual CoMSAA events calendar, the academic sessions and the reunion, was held this year at the Blue Waters Hotel and Spa on the 7th and 8th of September 2019. The chief guests were Dr B J C Perera and Mrs Sarojini Perera. The academic lectures were delivered by Prof Ravindra Fernando, Prof Chandanie Wanigatunga and Dr Hemantha Perera.

The highlight of the day was the much awaited debate titled "There should not be a dress code at the workplace". Dr Nirmala Wijekoon and Dr Yasa Abeywickrama represented the proposing team whilst Dr Upul Dissanayaka and Dr Anula Wijesundere represented the opposing team. The lectures and the debate was followed by a social programme which involved games, dancing, music and prizes galore.

### 6. Donation and repair of musical instruments

Dr Sumithra Thisera donated a Panasonic key board organ to the Aesthetic Society of the faculty. Dr Cristo Fernando undertook the repair of the drum-set belonging to the society and the donation of a pedal.



### 7. AKO scholarship programme

A MoU was signed between CoMSAA and Mosvold-Martinus Trust to provide 26 scholarships to underprivileged students of the Colombo Faculty of Medicine. Mr Martinus, Chairman MM Trust and Dr Iyanthi Abeyewickreme, President CoMSAA 2018/19, signed on behalf of the two organizations.



### 8. Contribution to 150th celebrations of the Colombo Faculty of Medicine

As the 150th year anniversary celebrations draws closer, CoMSAA is proud to be a part of its many activities and programmes. Some of these activities that are planned in partnership with CoMSAA include the medical exhibition and the academic congress, details of which are enclosed in the following pages.

All the above activities would not have been possible if not for our membership. As an alumnus of our prestigious institution, you too can contribute in many ways to make the Colombo Medical Faculty be the legend it always is. We invite all of you to join hands with us and to be part of CoMSAA, to achieve this goal.

***Dr Sumithra Tissera and Dr Gayani Ranaweera***



## 8th Annual Academic Sessions and Reunion – 2019

This year's reunion and academic sessions were held on the 7th and 8th of September at the Blue Water Hotel and Spa, Wadduwa.

The 7th evening session was attended by about 70 alumni doctors and their family. There was singing by a group as well as musical performances by our own alumni. The ladies particularly, danced away to the non-stop music of Dr B J C Perera, who entertained the audience with melodies from the past.





The main academic sessions were held on 8th morning onwards, at the hotel auditorium. Participants were those who stayed overnight as well as the ones who joined for the day. The sessions started with a one minute silence in memory of Prof Carlo Fonseka, who was a teacher to most of the alumni who were present. The sessions were then inaugurated with the lighting of the lamp of learning and singing of the national anthem. The participants were welcomed by the President CoMSAA, Dr Iyanthi Abeyewickreme, who gave a description of activities done so far during her presidency.







Chief Guest, Dr B J C Perera, Consultant Pediatrician and Past President CoMSAA, gave an interesting speech which included the health benefits of sports and exercise. He emphasised that for the elderly, especially those of the fairer sex, exercise has a strong inverse relationship with ischemic heart disease and that regular exercise is the only economical, safe and readily available way of enhancing bone strength and securing

protection from many non-communicable diseases.

Prof Jenifer Perera, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, in her speech, presented the 150th year anniversary celebrations planned for next year. She also detailed the infrastructure development and beautification projects being carried-out at the faculty.



The academic sessions commenced after these inaugural activities. Prof Rezvi Sherrif and Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa chaired the sessions. Prof Ravindra Fernando, Consultant Forensic Pathologist, spoke on "40 years of accidents, suicide and murder", Professor Chandanie Wanigatunge, Professor of Pharmacology and President of Ceylon College of Physicians, spoke on "Brush strokes - a foray into Sri Lankan temple



paintings" and Dr Hemantha Perera, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynecologist, on "Beyond obstetric freight services".





A debate followed these three interesting lectures. The topic for this year's debate was "There should not be a dress code at the workplace." The moderators for the debate were Dr Kushlani Jayatillake and Dr Lasantha Malavige. Dr Nirmala Wijekoon and Dr Yasa Abeywickrama represented the proposing team and Dr Upul Dissanayaka and Dr Anula Wijesundere represented the opposing team. After much deliberations to support their view point, the opposing team won by a narrow margin.



Dr Nilanka Munasinghe entertained the audience with three beautiful songs, after which the formal academic sessions was completed.



The vote of thanks was given by Dr Gayani Ranaweera, Joint Secretary, CoMSAA. The singing of the faculty song followed.



The subsequent social program had some fun events. Three prize-winning events were organized. The first was a mind-boggling quiz which had questions ranging from music, medicine, sports and quotes by famous persons. The second was a memory game where a human picture with demarcated body parts were shown and a person blind-folded was asked to recall these demarcated body parts and to paste stickers on a live person indicating these body parts. The final event was to find the team with the best non-verbal communication skills. The social programme ended with the 'baila' dance competition and a raffle draw. Dr Kushlani Jayatillake and Prof Joe Perera sang a duet and Dr Anula Wijesundere did a solo of a song written by Prof Carlo Fonseka. After a fun- and intellect-packed weekend, alumni and their families departed from the hotel.









## From the Editors: Being self-compassionate

Compassion is characterised by concern towards another's suffering. It usually involves taking action towards the alleviation of such suffering. Mental states such as patience and kindness are closely associated with compassion. All religions consider compassion a core virtue and gives suggestions on how to improve it further. Compassion is a core necessity in a great number of professions, including the health professions.

Self-compassion is compassion directed towards oneself. It promotes compassion towards others. Hence, it is distinct from being selfish or self-centred. Rather, self-compassion involves understanding that suffering, failings and inadequacies are part of the human experience and that humans, oneself included, is deserving and worthy of kindness and patience. Self-compassion entails three components: 1) extending kindness and understanding to oneself rather than harsh self-criticism and judgment; 2) seeing one's experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than as separating and isolating; and 3) holding one's painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them.

Those with greater self-compassion have better mental health indices, including lowered anxiety, depression and self-isolation. They also have an increased sense of well-being. Those who are more self-compassionate would also be more effective in their work-life. Their consideration of oneself with kindness and patience, with a non-judgemental stance, would be the same attitude with which s/he considers others. Self-compassion, hence, is most useful in the health professions. It leads toward being a more wholesome doctor characterised with better patient care. It also leads to increased work-place satisfaction amongst team members in the clinic and/or hospital context.

### How self-compassionate are you? Take the Self-compassion Scale:

*Rate all items in a scale of 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).*

*Then, reverse score the following items: 1, 4, 8, 9, 11, and 12 (i.e. a rating of 1 would be reverse scored as 5 and vice versa; a rating of 2 would be reverse scored as 4 and vice versa; a rating of 3 would not be reverse scored).*

*Then, total the ratings of all items to get your total self-compassion score.*

*Then, divide your total self-compassion score by 12, to get your average self-compassion score.*

As a rough guide, average scores for the Self-compassion Scale are around 3 on the 1-5 Likert scale, a score of 1-2.5 indicates low self-compassion, 2.5-3.5 indicates moderate, and 3.5-5 is an indication of high self-compassion.

1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy
2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like
3. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation
4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am
5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition
6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need
7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance
8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure
9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people
11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies
12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like

**Reference:**

Neff, K. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion, *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

***Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa and Dr Harshima Wijesinghe***



## Medicine in Sri Lanka The Legacy & The Future

Dear CoMSAA members,

As many of you would already know, the Colombo Medical Faculty will be celebrating its 150-year anniversary in 2020! This is a special moment for all of us whose formative years in medicine began at this prestigious institution, as we join together as the products of its rich history of one-and-a-half centuries, as a leader in medical education in our country and the South Asian region. The Faculty, together with CoMSAA, is organizing a series of events to commemorate this important milestone in the history of our alma mater.

A key event in the calendar will be the Colombo Medical Congress 2020, an International Congress, held from 12th to 15th February 2020 on the theme 'Medicine in Sri Lanka - The Legacy & the Future'. Our alumni association, the CoMSAA, will play a lead role in this historic event.

The objective of this Congress is to bring together alumni and other researchers as well as global experts to gather in a wealth of intellectual experiences to reiterate our leadership in healthcare, celebrate our pioneering status in medicine and inspire the future generations. Funds from these events will also be used to foster a research culture, develop learning facilities and support students to excel in academia.

The Congress will commence with a grand inauguration at the Waters Edge on 12th February 2020, followed by a three-day intensive Academic Programme at the Medical Faculty, Colombo, and a spectacular banquet at the Galle Face Hotel on 15th February 2020. The Congress will consist of a series of plenary lectures, guest lectures, seminars and symposia from almost all the specialties in the field of health sciences. Several eminent local and international speakers have agreed to participate in this important event.

The event will be complemented by free papers and poster presentations, social events (e.g., history walks) panel discussions, an international medical quiz, book launch, concerts by students and a multitude of other interesting events. We expect at least a thousand registrants and a record number of participants from around the world, including alumni, their families and colleagues, to be present at this historic event.



This is an invitation to our alumni to help our alma mater in making this event a success.

You can submit abstract for scientific papers to be presented during the Medical Congress (deadline extended to 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019). Please visit the website [colombomedicalcongress.org](http://colombomedicalcongress.org) for more information. Abstract submissions are through the electronic system.

If interested in providing a donation to assist us in organizing this event and develop our alma mater please write to [info@colombomedicalcongress.org](mailto:info@colombomedicalcongress.org) or call +94 - 701400300 to discuss further details.

We anticipate a positive and enthusiastic response from you and your batchmates and hope to see you actively participate in this Congress and its social programmes.

Welcome to the Colombo Medical Congress 2020 - be part of a historic event!

Prof Saroj Jayasinghe  
Co-chair

Dr Prasad Katulanda  
Co-chair

A joint venture by The Faculty of Medicine,  
University of Colombo & Colombo Medical School  
Alumni Association (COMSAA)

More information

+94-701400300



The poster features a purple and blue background with a starry, nebula-like pattern. At the top left is the University of Colombo seal. At the top right is a 150th anniversary logo (1870-2020) featuring a building. The main title 'MEDI VISION' is in large, stylized, glowing purple letters, with a stethoscope around the 'M' and a syringe around the 'N'. Below it, '2020' is in similar glowing purple letters. Underneath the title is the text 'Faculty of Medicine - University of Colombo'. The poster is divided into four horizontal sections by white lines, each with a circular inset image and a text label to its right. The first section shows two surgeons in an operating room, labeled 'Hands on experience'. The second section shows a green globe with a tree growing from it, labeled 'Impact of environment on health'. The third section shows a silhouette of a human life cycle from birth to old age, labeled 'Life cycle and health'. The fourth section shows a healthcare worker in a pink shirt and blue vest examining a child, labeled 'Screening at health camps'. At the bottom, the event dates and location are written in bold blue text.

**MEDI VISION**  
Faculty of Medicine - University of Colombo

**2020**

*Hands on experience*

*Impact of environment on health*

*Life cycle and health*

*Screening at health camps*

**From 30<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2020,  
at the University of Colombo.**

## CoMSAA Annual General Meeting

Dear Alumni,

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of CoMSAA is scheduled to be held on **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 6.00 pm** at the Boardroom of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo.

Office bearers and ten Executive Committee Members for 2019-2020 shall be elected at the AGM.

The President Elect for 2019/2020 is Vidyajothi Prof. Rezvi Sheriff.

If you wish to join the CoMSAA Executive Committee please contact **Dr. Gayani Ranaweera**, Joint Secretary, Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, Kynsey Road, Colombo, by email on [gayanimfc@gmail.com](mailto:gayanimfc@gmail.com) or phone on 011-2695300 ext 188 or before the **04<sup>th</sup> November 2019**.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the AGM

Thank you

Best Regards

Dr Sumithra Tissera  
Co Secretary CoMSAA



## Members' Corner:

### Contributions from Dr B J C Perera

#### Men are just happier people! What else do you really expect from simple creatures such as men (as seen by women)?

His last name stays forever. The garage is all his. Wedding plans take care of themselves. Chocolate is just another snack. He can never get pregnant. He can go bare-bodied to a water park. Car mechanics tell him the truth. The world is his urinal, especially around the big trees. He never has to drive to another petrol station washroom because this one is 'yucky'; the fact that he can aim from a distance definitely helps. He routinely lifts the toilet seat to the erect position after sitting on it.

He does not have to stop and think of which way to turn to tighten a nut on a bolt. Facial wrinkles add character to him. People never stare at his chest when he is talking to them. He has just one mood all the time. Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds, flat, or perhaps 2 minutes, occasionally. He knows all the stuff about fighter planes, war tanks and guns. A five-day vacation requires only one medium-sized suitcase. He can open all his own jars.

If someone forgets to invite him, he or she can still be his friend. His underwear is Rs.1500 for a five-pack. Two pairs of shoes are more than enough. He does not have bra strap problems in public. He doesn't mind the odd crinkle in his clothes. Everything on his face always maintains its original colour. The same hairstyle lasts for years, maybe decades. He only has to shave his face and neck. He can play with toys all his life. He has just one wallet and even one pair of shoes; one colour for all seasons. He can wear shorts no matter how his legs look. He can 'do' his nails with a pocket knife. He has the freedom of choice to grow or not to grow a moustache. He can do Christmas shopping for 20 relatives on December 24th in 45 minutes.

No wonder men are happier!

*From an e-mail by Prof Sanath P. Lamabadusuriya, extracted and slightly modified by Dr. B J C Perera*

### About men and women

Nicknames: If Nelun, Lakmini and Sumi go out for lunch, they will call each other Nelun, Lakmini and Sumi. If Sarath, Nihal and Supun go out, they will affectionately refer to each other as Fat Boy, Bubba, and Gona.

Eating out: When the bill arrives, Sarath, Nihal and Supun each will throw in 500 bucks even though the bill is just 980. When the girls get their bill, out comes the pocket calculators. Nowadays they are on to the calculators in their mobile phones.

Money: A man will even pay Rs 200 for a Rs 100 item that he really needs. At a sale, a woman will definitely pay Rs 100 for a 300 Rupee article that she does not need.

Bathrooms: A man has six items in his bathroom; toothbrush and toothpaste, shaving cream, razor, a bar of soap and a towel. It is said that the average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 337. A man would not be able to identify more than about 15 of these items.

Arguments: A woman has the last word in any argument with a man. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

The future: A woman worries about the future until she gets a husband. A man never worries about the future until he gets a wife.

Marriage: A woman marries a man expecting he will change, but he doesn't. A man marries a woman expecting that she would not change, but she does.

Dressing up: A woman will dress up to go shopping, water the plants, empty the trash, take a call, read a book and even to get the mail. A man will dress up to go to work and attend parties, weddings or funerals.

Natural: Men generally wake up as good-looking as they did when they went to bed. Women somehow deteriorate during the night.

Offspring: Ah, ha, children. A woman knows all about her children. She knows about dentist appointments and romances, best friends, favourite foods, secret fears, and even their hopes and dreams. A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

A final bit of thoughtful advice ...: A married man should very definitely forget his past mistakes. There is no use in two people remembering the same thing! Anyhow, he will be reminded of all the mistakes regularly.

*From an e-mail by Prof Sanath P. Lamabadusuriya, extracted and slightly modified by Dr B J C Perera*

### Inspirational reflections

Man O Man!

When without money, he eats vegetables at home;  
When he has money, eats the same vegetables in a fine dining restaurant.

When without money, he rides a bicycle;  
When he has money, he rides the same bike in the form of an 'exercise machine'.

When without money, he walks to earn food;  
When he has money, he walks to burn fat.

When without money, he wishes to get married;  
When he has money, he wishes to get divorced.

When without money, the wife becomes his secretary;  
When he has money, the secretary becomes his wife.

When without money, he acts like a rich man;  
When he has money, he acts like a poor man.

He says the share market is bad, but keeps on speculating;  
Then he says money is evil, but he keeps on accumulating it.

He says that high positions are lonely;  
But he keeps on wanting them.

### 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](mailto:comsaa2011@gmail.com).



#### Editors

Prof Piyanjali de Zoysa  
Dr Harshima Wijesinghe