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CoMSAA Newsletter



APRIL 2022

CoMSAA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2022

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President's Message

Dr Anula Wijesundere
President, CoMSAA



It gives me great pleasure to send this message to the first CoMSAA newsletter of 2022. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be elected as the President of the CoMSAA. I thank the membership for this singular honour and the confidence placed in me in selecting me for this post.

I am also grateful as this position as president of the CoMSAA gives me an opportunity to pay back a debt of gratitude I owe to the Colombo Medical School, for the superb training we received from a band of very dedicated teachers of our faculty.

Prof Prasad Katulanda, the immediate past president, deserves our special appreciation for steering the CoMSAA through the worst Delta COVID-19 wave which overcame our nation in 2021. He also gave leadership to the successful completion of the Colombo Medical Congress.

The council of the CoMSAA 2022 comprises of a mixed band of alumni, the young, the young old and the middle old. This combination, I am sure will bring out the best blend of wisdom, experience, innovation and new vision for the benefit of the CoMSAA. Let us all work together with added zeal for the good of all.

The programme of events planned for the year is as follows. The annual CoMSAA Lecture on March 10 will be delivered by Dr Chandima Amarasena. Hopefully we would be able to have the annual CoMSAA reunion by late August, followed by the Colombo Medical Congress in October. The main student activity planned for the year is the inter batch general knowledge quiz which will be held in July. We will be continuing the annual students educational grants in 2022. I am very grateful to our magnanimous donors Mrs Chandrani Silva and Dr P N Fernando for their generosity in making these grants a reality.

I greatly appreciate the commitment of the past presidents and councils in fulfilling the objectives of the CoMSAA. With the support of the council, I hope we can reach even greater heights in 2022.

CoMSAA Activities

A Report from the Co-secretaries

Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting of CoMSAA 2021/2022 was held on the 16th of December 2021. The meeting was a hybrid event with onsite participation at the Board Room, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. The meeting was chaired by Prof Prasad Katulanda, President, CoMSAA 2020/2021.

The new executive committee 2021/2022 was appointed under the leadership of Dr Anula Wijesundere. Dr Wijesundere detailed her plan for the coming year.

The President's medal of CoMSAA was handed over by ex-president Prof. Prasad Katulanda to the current president, Dr. Anula Wijesundere at the CoMSAA executive committee meeting held at the senior common room.



The activities carried out by the committee in the first quarter are presented here.

CoMSAA Executive Committee 2021/2022



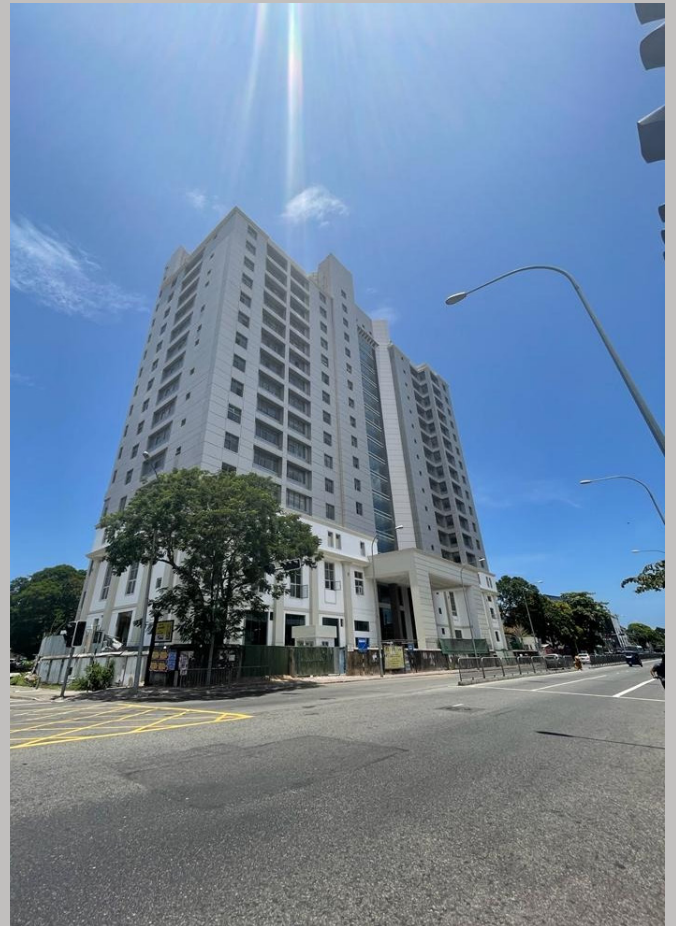
Seated (left to right) - Dr Dilushi Wijayarathne (Co-secretary), Prof A.H. Sheriffdeen, Prof Prasad Katulanda (Immediate Past President), Dr Anula Wijesundere (President), Prof Sanath P. Lamabadusuriya (President Elect), Dr Pramila Senanayake (Social Secretary), Dr Kalyani Guruge (Vice President), Prof Vajira H.W. Dissanayake (Dean, FOM-UOC)

Standing (left to right) - Dr Dineshani Hettiarachchi (Editor), Dr Leonard Wanninayake (Assistant Treasurer), Dr G.S. de Silva, Dr Dakshitha Wickramasinghe (Treasurer), Prof Panduka Karunanayake (Vice President), Dr Ajitha Wijesundere, Prof Priyadarshani Galappaththy (Vice President), Dr Asela Anthony, Dr Rameshkumar Thevarajah (Assistant Editor), Dr Sulakshi Thelikorala (Co-Secretary)

Absent - Dr Isurujith Liyanage, Dr Dinesha Jayasinghe, Dr Asanka Ratnyake, Prof Jennifer Perera, Dr Sarath Gamini de Silva, Prof Narada Warnasuriya, Dr Saravanamuththu Poolanganathan, Dr Sumithra Tissera, Prof Saroj Jayasinghe, Dr Iyanthi Abeywickreme, Dr B.J.C. Perera

Visit to the New Faculty Building

At the invitation of Prof. Vajira Dissanayake, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, 10 members of the executive committee of the CoMSAA joined the tour of the new faculty premises on Wednesday, 2nd of March 2022. The construction of imposing 17-storied structure has cost approximately Rs 50 billion. The building comprises of a large auditorium, lecture halls with state-of-the-art equipment, roof garden, numerous committee rooms and individual floors for various departments. The building has been named the University of Colombo Faculty of Medicine (UCFM) tower. The tour was conducted by Prof Vajira Dissanayake and Prof Pujitha Wickramasinghe, Chairman of the building committee. We were particularly interested in the library as the CoMSAA has donated Rs 2.2 million towards developing the learning commons area within the library. The money will be used to purchase 120 chairs and 30 tables for the library.



Establishment of the Australian Chapter

The Australian Chapter of CoMSAA was established as the first CoMSAA Overseas Chapter on the 5th of March 2022. The CoMSAA President Dr Anula Wijesundere and immediate past president Prof Prasad Katulanda participated virtually. We congratulate the newly formed Chapter and its founder committee and wish them well in their endeavours.

Special General Committee Meeting

A special general committee meeting was held on the 10th of March 2022 to discuss proposals to change the constitution. The meeting was held virtually, and the following two resolutions were passed.

Resolution I

To include under ARTICLE XVI: Country and Regional Chapters

5. All members of the Country and Regional Chapters shall be Members of CoMSAA, the parent body in Sri Lanka.
6. The President or Vice President of each Country or Regional Chapter shall be co-opted to the Executive Committee of the CoMSAA.
7. The President or Vice President of CoMSAA shall be invited to participate in the Annual General Meeting of the Country or Regional Chapter
8. Each Country or Regional Chapter of the Association shall carry the name of the Association, Colombo Medical School Alumni Association, followed in the next line by the name of the Country or Region as a Chapter.

Resolution II

To amend ARTICLE IX: Executive Committee

- 1.5 to be to be numbered as I.6
- 1.6 to be numbered as 1.7
- 1.5 Introduce new clause
- 1.5 The immediate past Treasurer of the Association (Ex- Officio)

The CoMSAA Lecture

The CoMSAA Lecture was delivered by Dr. Chandima Amarasena, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, NHSL on 10th of March 2022 at the Faculty of Medicine, New Building Lecture Theater. Dr Amarasena delivered an inspiring talk on “Leonardo da Vinci titled - Art, Science and Anatomy” and presented some of Da Vinci’s lesser-known contributions to the fields of science and medicine.



Donation of the water filter

The CoMSAA is pleased to have donated a water filter to the Senior Common Room of the Faculty.



Student Educational Grants

This year CoMSAA will be sponsoring scholarships to needy students in the final year, with educational grants aimed to increase the student financial assistance to Rs 6000/= per student per month.

The following individuals have generously offered donations this year

Ms Chandrani Silva	Rs 480 000
Mr Janaka Silva	Rs 48 000
Dr PN Fernando	Rs 240 000
Ms Sweenetha Amarasinghe	Rs 48 000
Prof Prasad Katulanda	Rs 30 000

This year, once again, the Batch of 1975 has stepped up to donate stethoscopes and torches to 10 students commencing clinical rotations. The CoMSAA expresses its appreciation of their continued generosity and support.

Membership drive

This year one of the main goals of the President, Dr Anula Wijesundere is to increase the membership. We are happy to note that the membership of CoMSAA has expanded with 45 new members joining this year, increasing the membership to 1018, and hope that we can recruit many more new members in the months to come.

Upcoming Events

1) “Do you know?” quiz

We are all looking forward to the CoMSAA “Do you know?” quiz scheduled for July this year. This will see students of all batches competing with one another to test their general knowledge. This is sure to be a popular event among the students. We hope to see some alumni coming to show them their support.

2) Colombo Medical Congress

The Colombo Medical Congress is scheduled from 23rd to 26th November. This will be a hybrid event with onsite participation at the new University of Colombo Faculty of Medicine tower. Details of the congress will be available soon and we invite all our alumni to participate in this event.

3) CoMSAA annual get-together

The annual CoMSAA get-together which has been tentatively scheduled for the 27th/28th of August 2022. We will be in touch with you regarding the details of the event.

Dr Dilushi Wijayarathne & Dr Sulakshi Thelikorala
Co-Secretaries 2021/2022

The Commencement Lecture

The CoMSAA was happy to participate at the Commencement lecture 2022, delivered by Prof Rohan Jayasekera on 31st January to welcome the new batch of students (AL 2020) to the faculty. The Sumi Moonesinghe award was presented by Dr Anula Wijseundere to Miss RMNN Rathnayake, for obtaining highest marks at the Basic Sciences Stream.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to deliver this Commencement Lecture, to this new batch of fledgling undergraduates of the Faculty of Medicine University of Colombo, who are launching their undergraduate academic careers today. For this opportunity afforded to me be a part of this milestone in your lives, dear students. I wish to sincerely thank from the core of my heart, the President of the Faculty of Medicine Teachers Association – Prof. Sudharshani Wasalathanthri and the Dean Vidya Jyothi Senior Prof. Vajira Dissanayake for the invitation extended to me.

My sincere congratulations go out to all you students, for gaining entry to this prestigious seat of learning and teaching. I also salute and honour all your parents for their care and commitment in guiding you to enter this hallowed institution.

Dear Students, many years ago I was just like you seated at my first Inaugural Lecture as it was referred to then, with a sense of anxiety and insecurity. Let us for a moment then look back and analyse the person you were before you came here as a freshman or freshwoman. Amidst all the fun the carefree times and the happiness of school life, there were long stretches of time when you had to bury yourself in books and work to gain entry to this Institution. Well, you did it and here you are.

The focus and discipline that was required to complete your studies and then compete in that examination – the advanced levels will hopefully benefit you for the rest of your life. In that exercise you may have lost a few million neurons. But do not be disappointed, as billions more of them are still intact, particularly

the neurons involved in rational and logical thinking and basic reasoning, still in their original packaging waiting to be used.

When we look back on our lives, the past has always been a source of knowledge and the future a source of hope. Let us then as we move forward in the third decade of this millennium, for a moment turn around and look at the past, the history of this faculty. The year 1870 saw the birth of this faculty and in 2020 this faculty the 2nd oldest medical school in Australasia celebrated 150 years of producing medical professionals of the highest calibre serving humanity in six continents. This achievement makes this faculty the matriarch of all faculties in Sri Lanka and even in Asia. This is indeed a pride to us all. I am also personally happy and proud to have served this Faculty for 48 years and one month for today, the 31st of January 2022, having assumed duties as a much slimmer, and a very much younger and an innocent looking lecturer on Jan 1, 1974.

Dear students, you are very fortunate and blessed to have been selected to this faculty. Because this faculty is staffed by academic giants who have a vision and a mission and an unquenchable thirst to succeed. Some of them I am happy to see in the audience today. They are also assisted by a galaxy of young and brilliant senior lecturers fresh from their overseas training and bristling with enthusiasm. All of them true patriots who are today serving our country. I salute you dear members of the academic staff.

From this day forward, you the students will be the fortunate beneficiaries who could drink deeply from these freely available fountains

of knowledge, your academic staff. These fountains of wisdom still gush with the same power and ferocity it has always been famous for. So do appreciate and relish this invaluable opportunity.

Knowledge by far and large can be acquired from books and the Internet, but this faculty will teach you to think critically, analyse logically, write clearly, and speak articulately. In other words, it will show you the right way to acquire knowledge rather than by repetitive parrot like learning and committing to memory, which of course most of you acquired during your exposure to the advanced level culture. So dear students wash off the stains of that culture, get rid of it, and embrace a new and progressive one.

Be ready to read for the degree MBBS and not study for it. This degree I assure you will not be easily earned or lightly given. Your education and the time you are going to spend here, is not merely the means to a good job and financial security. Those are certainly important concerns, but I am hoping for much more out of you. To come all this way only to become just a cog in a large machine or merely an indistinguishable and insignificant thread in a massive tapestry is not enough. It just isn't. The world and our country needs people who can think and who have a vision and new ideas. We all have physical sight but only some of us have a vision. So dear students, like your faculty which has a strong and challenging vision, do build your own personal visions that will direct and guide you to achieve your life's goals and objectives.

Today, the world at large is facing a grave economic recession. At the same time the reality of a more severe or devastating 'professional recession' is plain to see. This is a new phenomenon far more serious than the other. It is discussed in the medical hierarchy that the overall quality of the new medical graduate is certainly becoming poorer by the year. Many present-day graduates seem

detached from reality; they seem virtual, rebellious, unreasonably demanding and sadly, disrespectful in society. Why? Because they got a degree but not an education. Let us then, the staff and the students make every effort to reverse this dangerous trend. A challenge we need to meet with determination, to safeguard and uphold the dignity of our noble profession.

It is your duty therefore dear students to conduct yourself in the manner expected of you as a potential member of the medical family. Thereby you will assist your dear teachers to transform this lethargy and lassitude into the former energy and dynamism we experienced in the years gone by.

We all know dear students that you are like wet cement. Everything that falls on you will make an impression. So be aware, or should I say beware of rebellious movements and antisocial political ideologies that will destroy your future and with it the aspirations and expectations of this faculty and that of your dear parents. That is certainly not the way to pay back your country and parents that eternal debt of gratitude.

Your parents did not send you here to read for a degree in rebelling or how to fan unprofessional uprisings. Are you here to create history by changing the geography of this our beloved Sri Lanka? I sincerely hope that you will never harbour such distracting and destructive thoughts as you launch this new phase in your life. You are here to learn how to be a respected healer and serve our brothers and sisters in this our dear country or any other country you hail from. Remember that you Sri Lankan students are receiving education comparable to any university on this planet at no financial cost, and that you owe society a life-long debt of gratitude.

Dear Students, observe your teachers, grow with them, and emulate them, for that is how we learnt from the giants of the past. Knowledge apart, your teachers will function as living models of what is expected of you as a member of this noble profession. Your teachers in the

years ahead will be your mentors and guides, your counselors, and even your friends. To them you will direct your queries, your fears and even your vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Be rest assured, that they will be your beacons of light in the darkest of nights.

Each of you dear students have come here from varied backgrounds, so different from each other not only culturally, but socially, financially, and even spiritually. So how will you adapt to this new university life which will be naturally so diverse and certainly very challenging? Let me very confidently state, that irrespective of what your home is, what school you hailed from, whether it was from an insignificant little school in the back of beyond or from a so-called prestigious school in a big city, it matters not.

Whether you spoke English fluently or not, whether your parents were educated professionals or mere simple wage earners who struggled to get you here by baking hoppers or tilling the soil is of no concern to us. All of you dear precious students are equal in the eyes of the faculty and each one of you have the same equal opportunity to be successful. What you will need however, is a burning ambition and a goal, and an enthusiasm and a drive to succeed, and of course the mental and physical strength to fortify it.

As a medical student or doctor, you will need mental strength coupled with physical fitness and endurance. This is a vital prerequisite as the practice of medicine is certainly a physically demanding challenge. In preparation for this aspect of your mandatory requirements you will need to pay special attention to your health both physical and mental. You will need to stay physically healthy by consuming a balanced and nutritious diet while abstaining from toxic and damaging social habits and maintain a very controlled and harmonious state of mental health. These basic needs can be strengthened by your paying attention to some factors which you may consider as mere trivia such as time management, making every effort to sandwich a weekly time allocation for a bit of relaxation and exercise. Enjoy the lungs of our city, our very own University grounds, the Vihara Maha Devi Park and of course the Galle Face Green.

Such easily accessible venues just a few minutes away from the faculty will offer you a whiff of fresh air that will blow away the stresses and tensions of the day brought on by your curricular obligations and examinations.

Modern day private sector companies when recruiting staff, eagerly scout for talents and not skills. This is due fact that with talents come attitudes and competencies, which are far more important than skills. So do develop your competencies and talents. For instance, should you have talent in an extracurricular activity, be it sports, the arts, drama, dancing, music, painting, singing or sculpture, nurture and nourish that talent. Do not nudge them to the back burner or abandon them in view of the demanding curriculum. Pursue them with the same vigour and vitality you had before you came here. For what the profession needs are multitalented accomplished doctors.

In this context you will soon be aware of the broad spectrum of societies and associations in the faculty and in the main university which will foster and strengthen your individual talents and competencies, be it in the arts or sports. Explore these avenues and add on another rich and rewarding facet to your achievements as a graduate. Through these activities you will have an opportunity to meet, mingle and socialize with your fellow students from the other sister faculties, forging lasting encounters that will bring a new freshness to your life, adding a different perspective and widening your horizons. Perhaps even a budding romance and productive partnerships in the years ahead.

Dear students, you are the fortunate few who will experience that rich kernel, the inner core, or should I say the medulla of a true undergraduate life. The faculty will be your second home during these crucial and formative years of your life. So do experience every moment of it to the fullest and enjoy these wonderful years before you.

To successfully reach the standards expected of you in the years ahead while reading for the degree MBBS, an invaluable quality or trait you will need to develop is self-esteem. Self-esteem is the view that you have of yourself, your values,

your strengths, your weaknesses and how you think others see you. In performing this evaluation of yourself do not ever underestimate your worth. Be confident and allow no one to damage or destroy your confidence, as this will negatively impact every aspect of your life. At the same time do not overestimate yourself either and lose your stability and balance. That will be disastrous to say the least. It is said that there are two important days in one's life. The day you are born and the day you find out who you are. So do assess yourself and your capabilities and build up your real strengths while noting your limitations. We all have limitations, and the sooner we know them the better. So dear students, throughout your lives have your feet planted firmly on the ground and your heads fixed firmly on your shoulders. Don't lose it and be lost forever.

As you peer inwards assessing your strengths and weaknesses, should you be convinced that you are skilled in handling the scalpel at dissections, develop the skills that will channel you towards specializing in Surgery or Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ophthalmology or Oto-rhino-laryngology in the years ahead. If you have been fascinated in the present time by the chaos and mischief caused by the two now infamous and notorious acidic cousins DNA and RNA and their lethal comrades the virus variants, follow your dean into a fascinating journey in Molecular Genetics. Should you have the knack for simplifying a problem and explain it to your batchmates, develop this talent further, for here is a teacher in the making. Remember, that your teachers will always be at hand to encourage and guide you along.

To achieve all this however you will also need to widen your vocabulary in English and develop a sound command of the English language, along with the skills of oratory and public speaking. Read the English newspapers and listen to foreign English news. Don't get me wrong, I am not being snobbish or against the use of Tamil, Sinhala, or any other language. Because the reality of it is that English both the written and spoken word will be the dominant and important language that will be used in your entire medical career. In my experience,

I know of many medical undergraduates' way back in the 1970s who could barely speak a sentence in English as freshers. But today, they are delivering Orations, teaching in prestigious foreign universities, and making breath taking presentations in perfect English. If they can and did it, so can you dear students.

Of course, on the same subject of self-esteem, to further enhance or improve your image, you need to acquire a good dress sense to augment your clinical skills. To be well groomed, clean, neat, and tidy and always dressed smartly, is a non-negotiable soft skill. After all you are going to be doctors, and it is time to focus on these finer adornments in your career.

Another interesting trait many in the medical profession lack in the present time is humour. Even the serious Mahatma Gandhi appreciated humour. He once said, "If I had no sense of humour, I would long ago have committed suicide". Dear students. If you are in the company of people, use humour to make your mates and all those around you happy. "Humour is like a lighted candle. It loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle". So, dissect out your own facial nerves, find them, tickle them and light up your facial muscles of expression. Make a genuine effort to be pleasant and happy. Tell me, of what use are boring, dull, and glum doctors in this exciting profession of ours, whose chins brush the very floor they walk on?

Dear students, today you have begun a journey, having launched your little boat, and looking to navigate it through this vast expanse of an uncharted ocean of medical training that lay before you. I know it is a challenge. And you are bound to experience from time-to-time during this journey sudden storms of hopelessness, frustration, and disappointment.

There may be times, specifically in the first few terms, when you may feel lost and depressed. Should you experience such episodes, do not allow these miniscule disappointments or obstacles to slow you down. We have all been through this during our student days. That steep, ascending and winding flight of steps that never seems to end and those sleepless

nights. Oh Yes! I remember them. I have been there. Let me tell you dear students that I, even at my silver age, after experiencing 72 revolutions around the sun still do battle these negative feelings. In your situation remember, that you are not alone. The faculty staff as I told you before will always be there to lend a heart and hand to you.

So, what is the secret to overcoming these negative thoughts and securing that inner peace and contentment that will guide you through your training and professional life? Elizabeth Kubler Ross, scientist doctor educator and the author of the book, a best seller 'On death and Dying' once said, "People are like stained-glass windows, they sparkle and shine when the sun is out but when darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within". That light in my opinion dear students is spirituality. Spirituality is associated with the human spirit or soul.

In general, present-day spirituality is confined to religious observances on specified days of the year. For instance, Christians such as myself go to holy mass on Sundays and tend to forget spirituality till the following Sunday, and we pray for divine intervention only when distress of some form affects us such as a failure, a disappointment or sickness. Is that spirituality? Certainly not. I would like to term it rituality. Spirituality dear students is an eternal light which streams continuous rays of practical guidance upon us, bathing us in a glow of valuable spiritual gems it brings along to enrich our lives, such as compassion, kindness, humility gentleness and patience. Sterling qualities one needs to have or acquire, without which one will never be that true member of the profession of healing.

So dear students, if you have not experienced that elusive peace and contentment and need to give yourself direction, then avail yourself of this free and precious gift of spirituality. May I suggest that each morning when you wake up and when you retire at night, that you spend a few minutes with your God, deity or whoever you believe in and offer your gratitude for all that you are blessed with. Appreciate what you

possess and avoid grumbling about what you do not have. Remember that what we have is what we need and not what we want. Do appreciate that we have comparatively much more than many who share this planet with us.

My dear students, with the passing of time you all will graduate from one university. This university will give you an opportunity to get good academic training and balance your personal priorities. However difficult and different your life paths will be, remember that you have gained education. That is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten. With an astute Dean in the calibre of Vidya Jyothi Senior Professor Vajira Dissanayake at the helm of this faculty, I am confident, that he with his loyal dedicated and accomplished staff will guide you to your ultimate destinies.

Bringing this Commencement Lecture to a close and before I fade away, I do have a parting message for all you dear parents and students. Dear parents, please do continue with your love, care, and concern which you have for your children. Do stay in touch with them at home or visit them and continue to be involved in their lives. The faculty needs your assistance to mould them as worthy members of this noble Profession.

Dear students, read for your degrees but do not sacrifice your extracurricular pursuits, hobbies, sports, or any other pastimes. Strive to become accomplished members of the profession and make us and your dear parents proud of you. I wish you all the very best for a very successful, meaningful, and memorable stay in the faculty.

Ladies & Gentlemen, I also wish each of you present here today, those linked to us on a digital platform and all your families, peace, happiness, good health and above all contentment in your lives. May you all stay safe and strong during these challenging times. Thank you.



From the Editors

Social Media (SoMe) & Medical Education



COVID pandemic, despite its challenges and the carnage, saw the emergence of new, innovative avenues for many professions and industries. It has redefined and changed our way of living in many ways. Within the medical profession and as well as in medical education, it has made significant changes, from online delivery of lectures, presentations, CME activities, virtual conferences, and telehealth. In the context of medical education, online lectures are a step forward for delivery of content, although it was largely a unidirectional mode of transmission from educator to learner with limited engagement and participation of the learner in the process. However, certain social media platforms such as twitter have now paved the way for a more heightened engagement.

Social media is defined as web-based technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas and interests through virtual communities and networks. It includes blogs, photo sharing (Instagram, Flickr), video sharing (YouTube), microblogs (Twitter/Tumblr), business networks (LinkedIn), forums (Reddit) and social networks (Facebook). There is a widespread and increasing use of social media across all spectra of ages and professions. Compared to conventional learning methods, social media have multi-directional flow of information and thus it is ideal for participatory learning.

Gaining knowledge through social media from tweets, tweetorials, Twitter journal clubs, hashtags, podcasts, blogs and YouTube videos is gaining traction or have got established roles. This correspondingly removes the paywall by providing free access to participation without geographical or financial restrictions. Medical schools in the West and professional associations are using them for knowledge dissemination and participatory learning. Academic journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine use podcasts for audio summaries of published articles, interviews, clinical cases and YouTube videos to present visual abstracts of their published research and Instagram to post their Images in medicine.

Though social media have many advantages, there are some setbacks such as maintaining privacy, professionalism and misinformation. To minimise the disadvantages medical associations and medical schools have provided guidelines for its use.

Appropriate use of social media can supplement medical education and will be an innovative way to augment the engagement between learners/ educators.

Dr Rameshkumar Thevarajah
Dr Dineshani Hettiarachchi

Members' Corner

The Glorious 150 Years of the Colombo Medical School

In the year 2020, the month of June,
Heralds 150 years of the Colombo Medical School!
The diseased and depopulated Vanni, in the 1860s
Lead to the birth of the medical school in 1870

During Governor Hercules Robinson's reign,
In the surgical ward of Colombo General, the school began,
The colonial Northern Province surgeon, Dr James Loos,
Was the first principal of the Colombo Medical School

The names of the first teachers three,
Were doctors Loos, E.L. Koch and R. Andree.
Initially the medical course was a mere years three,
Was extended to four, in eighteen seventy three.

In 1875, the school moved to its new abode,
To land gifted by Samson Rajapakse on Kynsey Road.
J.W. Charles de Soysa, Simon Fernando & Wimala Gunawardana,
Were other generous donors who joined the benefactors role


Mr. C. H. De Soysa, the great benefactor with much generosity,
In 1879 built, the lying - in - home, for mothers to be:
The mothers were delivered and the students taught midwifery,
His statue at Lipton Circus stands as gratitude to his philanthropy!

The early buildings of the medical school exist no more,
As landmarks change & new structures galore!
All that remains of the oldest of the old stock,
Is the towering Dr. Edwin Kock memorial clock!


In 1870, beginning with mere 25 students on roll,
In 2020, bursting at seams, now over 1200, the toll!
In 1870, which began as an elementary medical school,
In 1880, was raised to college status we are told.

In 1873, the course from 3 to 4 years was extended,
In 1885, the LMS title with pride was appended,
In 1892, women were admitted to the medical school,
Miss de Boer, was the first female licentiate to bloom!

Doctors E. L. Kock, Vandersarten, were the second and third principals
For twenty years, Dr Vandersarten remained invisible
The book - "Diseases in children" he was the sole author,
To outstation medical students, he was almost a father!



The early requirements to enter the school,
Were merely English, native language, and arithmetic too;
In the present date, to enter the esteemed gate,
Needs a minimum of three high 'A's, my mate!



From 1898 to 1915, Sir Allan Perry, took the reins,
In his period the school flourished in stature and fame!
Sir Aldo Castellani who discovered trypanosomiasis and parangee,
In 1903, this Italian rose to the first chair in pathology.

The pioneer surgeons were Andree, Spittel, SC Paul and Rockwood,
Among physicians, Fowler, Marcus Fernando and Garvin Mac outstood.
These skilled teachers then worked as surgeons and physicians,
Unlike the present days of ultra and super specialization.

In 1920, heralded the golden jubilee of our school,
Was celebrated at home with much pomp and glee!
The chief guest on that day was Governor Henry Manning,
He awarded prizes and diplomas to doctors outstanding


In 1923, Dr Francis O'brien rose to first chair in physiology,
Many years later the physiology block became a "Kock & Bull story".
In 1927, Dr Gordon Smith became the first professor of anatomy,
PSS Panditharathne, the longest serving professor, 23 years of glory!

In 1924, the medical school, to college status flowered,
In 1942, the college to university status towered!
The rise of the medical faculty, owes much gratitude,
To Sir Ivor Jennings, for his attitude and great fortitude!

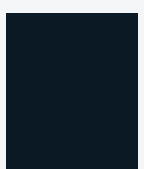
With university status the faculty acquired,
The LMS degree, to the MBBS, soon transpired.
Professor W A E Karunaratne was the first to the deanery,
He pioneered the subjects of public health and pathology

In 1933, Dr Wickramasuriya of malaria fame was first chair in obstetrics,
The same year Dr Milroy Paul rose to the first professor of surgery
Dr PB Fernando was appointed first professor of medicine in 1936,
In 1949, Dr CC de Silva became the founder professor of paediatrics.


In 1951, first chair of legal medicine was assumed by Dr de Seram JMO,
In 1956, Dr Sivalingam was appointed founder professor, of parasitology
Dr Hoover, first professor of biochemistry in 1958, served 40 years galore,
Same year Dr TED Chapman rose to the founder chair of bacteriology.




In 1945, the medical school was then seventy five,
Sir Nicholas Attygalle, the next dean, was considered as fine,
The Chancellor of the University, the Governor was the chief guest
An exhibition by medicos, was held with much zest!



Sir Nicholas Attygalle, during his period as dean,
Commenced the M.S and M.D - post graduate degrees,
In 1945, the medical course to five years was extended,
Four subjects for the third MBBS – were then created,



Professor O.E.R. Abeyratne, was the third dean,
From 1954 to sixty-seven, for years thirteen,
He was the pioneer professor of public health,
To purchase the electron microscope, he gathered much wealth



In 1958, Dr Senaka Bibile became the first professor of pharmacology,
He presented the national formulary and formed the SPC,
He pioneered supply of safe, effective, cheap drugs of quality,
Was hailed as a visionary and great benefactor to humanity.

From 1967 onwards, Prof Stanley Dissanayake was our dean,
He was the first faculty professor to be awarded the D.Sc,
He did pioneering research on filariasis and echinococcosis,
In 1970, he appointed Dr Channa Wijesinghe as new chair in psychiatry.

In 1970 June, our glorious century was a great celebration,
An event of great magnitude, that deserved much commemoration
Mr. William Gopallawa, the Governor General, on that day unveiled,
A tablet from the first 1870 building was then proclaimed!


In October 1969, we were the hundredth intake,
I was the hundredth student among one hundred and fifty mates,
In the grand medical exhibition held for a week in our faculty,
I explained the DNA model of scientists Watson and Crick.

In the centenary year, Professor Bibile delivered our commencement
lecture,
The title of the great lecture was “current student unrest”
I delivered the vote of thanks on that day, by popular request,
By coincidence, at 150 years I delivered the commencement lecture.

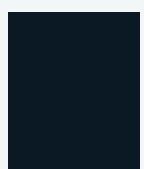
Of our clinical teachers who played a significant role,
Prof. Rajasuriya and Dr. HHR Samarasinghe are of special note,
The legendary Prof. Carlo Fonseka combined physiology with fire
While Prof Jayawardena’s anatomy, was a study to admire.


Professors Lionel and Kottegoda – pharmacologist of great stature,
While Prof. Nava, Geri J and Sheriffdeen taught us surgical matter,
Profs. Priyani Soyza and Jasmine Nanayakkara trained us in
paediatrics,
While Prof. Ranasinghe, Visva and Thavarasa were our masters in
obstetrics!

In research at the forefront was the department of parasitology
With Professor Kamini Mendis heading research in malariology,
Professor Mahroof Ismail transformed world therapy for filariasis
While Professor Karunaweera pioneered research in leishmaniasis.




In 1985, the Colombo Medical School introduced renal transplantation,
Professors Sheriffdeen, Geri J and Sheriff pioneered the innovation.
The Ox-Col project conducted by the faculty with University of Oxford,
New therapy for snake bite and yellow oleander since then emerged.





From 1917 onwards for the next half century,
Eleven great deans guided our schools' destiny
From 1970 to 82 Prof Kottegoda was the longest serving dean,
Was famed for his great love of nature and photography.



Professor Daphne Attygalle, our professor of pathology
Was the dean in line from 1982 to nineteen eighty six,
Professor Earle de Fonseka, the great conductor of symphony fame,
From 1986 to 1988 took over our faculty reins.

Deshamanya Professor Kodagoda was the next dean in line,
This forensic expert & Sinhala lyricist composed the school song so fine,
Professor Ismail of filarial fame was next at the helm,
Followed by Vidya Jyothi Lalitha Mendis who led the SLMA, SLMC & PGIM.

From 2002, Prof Lamabadusuriya was dean for the next four years
This paediatrician promoted palatal surgery and was awarded the MBE.
Professor Dulitha Fernando, the dean in 2005 was an expert statistician,
In 2008 came Professor Harsha Seneviratne the famed obstetrician.

In 2011, the genial Vidya Jyothi Prof Rohan Jayasekera, came to the fore,
This geneticist transformed the anatomy department with Prof Vajira as
never before
Popular Professor Jennifer Perera was our dean at one hundred fifty years,
She added four new departments and empowered the medical career.

In 2020, our dear medical school was hundred and fifty years
A rare event of great magnitude that needed much celebration!
The Colombo Medical Congress and banquet were held with great cheer
But sadly, the COVID pandemic cancelled all other celebrations, oh dear!

In the coming century, may our great school continue to soar,
Realize the aspirations of our founders and continue to roar!
May our medicos emulate wisdom, generosity and zest,
May our medical school by all faiths - forever be blessed!

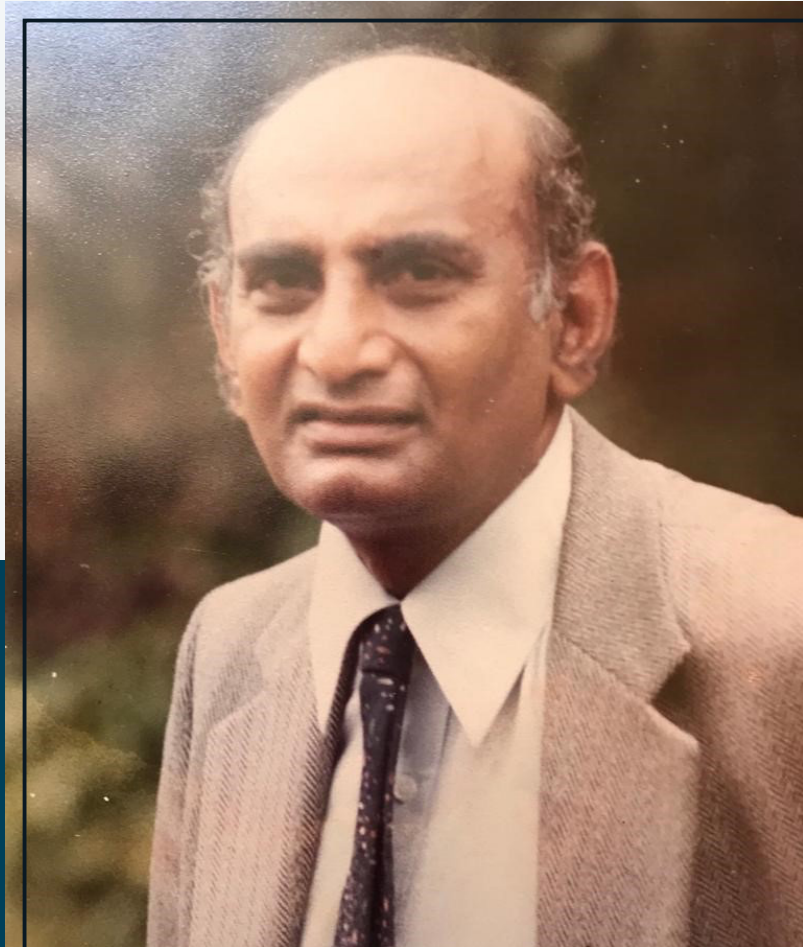
The Motto of the Colombo Medical School -
Competence, Compassion, Care
“Chirang Jayathu” - Long Live the Colombo Medical School!

Acknowledgements: the late Professor Carlo Fonseka
and the authors of “The Colombo Medical School at 150 years”.

Dr. Anula Wijesundere nee Samaranayake



Prof David Chanmugam Research Fund: A Tribute to a Silent Hero



(Based on the citation submitted by the author to the Faculty of Medicine which was read and approved by Senate of the University of Colombo).

The alumni association, CoMSAA and the Department of Clinical Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine will jointly establish the Prof David Chanmugam Research Fund to promote research in Medicine and other academic activities. The initial donation was by the family of our late Professor Chanmugam and we are indeed grateful to them for their initial proposal to make a donation.

This Fund is to perpetuate the memory Prof DCs a unique academic who made a silent, yet vast contribution to development of medicine in Sri Lanka.

Professor Devendranathan Chanmugam (known as David Chanmugam) came from a well-known family in Jaffna. He was born on 5th October 1930, schooled in St Thomas's Prep, Jaffna Central College and Royal College Colombo, and entered the Colombo Medical School. He qualified with MBBS from University of Ceylon in 1954 and proceeded to England and in 1955 obtained MBBS from the King's College Hospital Medical School University of London. He did his internship in the UK and proceeded to the US on a fellowship in Hematology from 1962 and joined the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ceylon (Colombo) as a Senior Lecturer in Medicine. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1974 and to Professor in 1978, a post he held until his resignation in 1985.

He left Sri Lanka during one of the darkest periods in our history that followed the riots of July 1983.

He worked in the USA for a number of years until his retirement, and later returned to live in Sri Lanka. He kept a low profile, but attended a few ceremonies organized by his grateful pupils to felicitate past teachers. He was cared for and was happy in his new home in Sri Lanka. His brother Chandi and sister Vidhy visited him regularly and his pupils provided him medical care. Following a brief illness, he passed away on 9th of June 2021 in a private hospital and was cremated on the 10th June at a very simple funeral ceremony under restrictions imposed for COVID-19.

Professor Chanmugam was unique: An uncompromising academic, an honest hard worker and above all a kind human being. As an academic, he was a scholar par excellence and had a very sharp and perceptive mind. He had a special interest in Haematology due to his experience in the US and had several publications to his credit in international journals. A key paper was the description of glucose intolerance in persons having erythrocyte glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency published in the high impact medical journal, the New England Journal of Medicine (1). Having done his training in the US he was a strong proponent of criteria-based approach to clinical medicine, which was a precursor to Evidence Based Medicine. He recommended American textbooks such as Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine and Cecil-Loeb Textbook of Medicine. In a sense he pioneered a North American approach to medicine in a country otherwise dominated by the British tradition.

He expected the students to demonstrate a scientific and humane approach to patient care and combined rigorous scientific analysis with patient-centered care. This was during an era when medicine was dominated by a biomedical model and therefore, shows his futuristic ideas.

Professor Chanmugam has influenced several generations of doctors with this very refreshing approach and was a father figure to his trainees, house officers, registrars, staff and patients. He treated them with kindness while having a façade of being stern with the students! Though he is no more, he has influenced several academics, doctors and physicians and encouraged generations of clinicians to be humane, to be scientific and scholarly. His unique approach to clinical practice and research will continue to enrich and influence patient care and academia in Sri Lanka.

Donations to the Prof David Chanmugam Research Fund can be remitted directly to the CoMSAA.

The writer was an undergraduate student of Professor Chanmugam. He worked as his house officer and trained under him as Registrar and Senior Registrar and joined his Department as a Lecturer in 1982.

Resources

Chanmugam, D., & Frumin, A. M. (1964). Abnormal Oral Glucose Tolerance Response in Erythrocyte Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency. New England Journal of Medicine, 271(23), 1202–1204.

Professor Chanmugam's CV was made available through Dr Ayesha Muthuveloe. Further information was provided by his brother Mr C Chanmugam.

Saroj Jayasinghe
Emeritus Professor Of Medicine

Bloemfontein Medical Hostel – What really happened in that fateful 1963 ‘Rag’

This is a story of an unusual hostel ‘rag’ in mid-April of 1963. It led to serious repercussions and remains a mystery to many of our colleagues, but here’s what really happened....

Bloemfontein (affectionately, and for convenience called ‘Bloem’) was a student hostel exclusively used for Colombo medical undergraduates, provided by the Colombo Medical Faculty. College House was another male student hostel situated along Thurstan Road within the Colombo University premises. It accommodated undergraduates from different faculties (majority being Colombo medical students).

No details available on any record, as to the use of this unusual name of Bloemfontein for the only male Medical Hostel in Colombo at the time. The origin derives from the Dutch word meaning ‘fountain of flowers’ and historically, was founded in 1846 as a fort in Free State Province in South Africa.

Bloem hostel is situated on Norris Canal Road adjoining Carey College just opposite the main entrance of Colombo Medical Faculty, and originally had accommodation for a total of 50 male students. I was one of them.

In 1962, Bloem hostel was quite a large and spacious old single storeyed building with several rooms in front and a large dormitory in the back. The spacious hall in the middle was used as the dining hall.

College House medical hostellers had their daily lunch at Bloem hostel along with ‘Bloemites’ and they were close friends and were treated as equals in all respects as they also attended the same medical faculty.

Bloem had a pernicious reputation and was notorious for its ‘fresher’s rag’ usually lasting 2 weeks (if you were lucky). The ‘freshers’ rag was accepted as ‘routine’ and was never inhumane or undignified. In spite of the close proximity to the medical college, its relatively cheap hostel fees (Rs.85/ month at the time), and the lack of available hostel accommodation, Bloemites could not

persuade many of their batch mates to join the hostel due apparently to the fear of the inevitable ‘fresher’s rag’.

All the hostellers from College House had to be found alternative accommodation or expected to terminate their hostel stay due to a decision made in 1962 for College House to be handed over for Colombo University Administrative functions.

A new multi-storeyed building for Bloem was completed around early 1963 with each room furnished to accommodate 2 student hostellers with bunk beds, ready for College House students (and any new applicants) to move in.

The original 50 ‘old’ Bloemites including this writer moved into the new accommodation (two students to a room with bunk beds). The old dining hall was still used for meals.

A few months later, late Dr Alles (Warden) told us that the medicos from College House (around 45) would be moving over to the newly opened multi-storeyed building.

Most of the old ‘Bloemites’ like myself who were already in occupation felt after much discussion that the College House medicos would be moving over to Bloem as ‘freshers’ and that they should be subjected to the usual 2-week rag.

We conveyed our intention to the College House medicos. In spite of several friendly ‘negotiations’, a few of the senior College House medicos remained adamant against our intended plans. Even a compromise for a milder rag - ‘ducking’ was totally rejected!

Dr Alles eventually told us the date and the time of the arrival of the hostellers from College House and told us to guide the ‘newcomers’ and offer all the assistance for a comfortable and easy move. They were also to be provided with dinner and meals thereafter.

Bloemites assured him of our fullest co-operation. However, we had other plans.

THE RAG

We told our kitchen staff that we would be going out to watch a film and would only return late in the night and that no dinner should be served to anyone till we returned.

All Bloemites then left the hostel around 5 pm (just prior to the expected time of arrival of College House hostellers) to watch a 6.00 pm Hindi Film at Elphinstone Theatre which was almost 3 and ½ hrs long.

We returned to Bloem around 9.30 pm. The College House hostellers had arrived around 5 pm and were waiting impatiently on the ground floor porch with their packed suitcases.

We casually ignored them as we entered the hostel and sat down at the dining table and asked the kitchen staff to serve the dinner as usual. We deliberately consumed our meal very slowly and did not allow anyone from College House to sit at the table till we finished ours.

After dinner, we assembled in one corner of the ground floor.

The College House medicos also returned to the ground floor after they had finished their meals and gathered around in the other corner.

We decided to give them the planned 'ducking' by asking them to jump into the pond voluntarily and if not, we would push others also into the pond. The ground floor pond was ornamental, had underwater illumination and abundance of water lilies. A plan was made to use force if needed.

We then moved over to them and announced our 'plan'.

Within minutes it was a free for all 'street fight' as many of the stronger newcomers resisted our efforts to make them jump into the pond. Blows were exchanged, few bruises sustained, shirts torn, clothes wet and dripping and sporadic bleeding from a few superficial bruises. No serious physical injuries ensued. The 'gang warfare' lasted a few minutes.

Eventually, Bloemites were able to duck

everyone in the pond as planned. Once this was achieved the heated atmosphere evaporated. Hands of friendship extended, hugs and smiles followed, bags and suitcases collected, and we started taking them upstairs to show them their rooms.

Just as we were taking them upstairs, we were surprised to notice a Benz car entering the hostel compound and our Dean, late Prof O.E.R. Abhayaratne stepping out of his car shouting in rage.

He asked all to fall in line and wanted to know all those who did not participate in the 'rag'. Not surprisingly none of the innocent wanted to admit their 'non-action' and maintained a united front.

The Dean showed his anger and shouted at all of us and declared his stern on the spot decision, that we all should vacate the hostel with immediate effect and the hostel would remain out of bounds till a final decision was made later.

Being familiar with the immediate explosive nature of the Dean, we knew him to be very kind-hearted. So, we expected a reversal of his punishment when he calmed down.

How & why he arrived at this ungodly hour around midnight to catch us in 'action' was too much of a coincidence.

It remains a mystery:

We became aware later that one of the College House hostellers who came in his scooter along with a pillion rider had taken off whilst we were busy organising the 'ducking', without our knowledge. The two had ridden fast to meet another medico from our own batch and a previous College House Hosteller and apparently exaggerated the whole episode to convince him that there was 'blue murder' and they were mercilessly being attacked. The batch mate they met happened to be a relative of the Vice-Chancellor and a family friend of the Dean.

The pillion rider is sadly no longer with us (don't worry, we remained good friends), but the other

two are still close comrades of ours and the 'powerful' relative still friendly but denies that he ever notified the Dean. Hence the mystery.

So what happened next?

All the hostellers having been 'expelled' from our hostel in the middle of the night had to spend the rest of the night on the road loitering around Norris Canal Road and along Kynsey Road near the Clock Tower, many in torn and wet clothes and some in sarongs, others in trousers. We were calmly confident and felt the problem could be resolved amicably the next day.

However, a few hours later, as we were still loitering along the dark and dimly lit road, another familiar Benz car came along Norris Canal Road and stopped just by the crossroads.

To our misfortune once again, it was the late Sir Nicholas Atygalle, Vice-Chancellor who was in the car with his driver. Instead of running away to avoid facing the Vice-Chancellor (who was notorious for his uncompromising power, authority and ruling with an iron fist in most instances) a few of us bravely (and stupidly) pretended to be a set of local wild street urchins from Maradana/ Wanathamulla loitering around aimlessly. We surrounded his car; cast a few unsavoury but light-hearted remarks about his bald head, big tummy, and his posh car, all the time making sure that we covered our faces with our sarongs.

It was a close call, but it was likely that the Vice-Chancellor may have been confused as to our true identity and would not have dreamt Colombo medical students would have behaved in such a wild, boisterous and uncivilised manner.

This may have been the reason why he ordered the driver to quickly move out and the car disappeared into the dark night and never returned.

The following morning, we met late Prof. Senaka Bibile, who was very sympathetic to us and agreed to meet the Dean on our behalf as a matter of urgency. All he wanted from us was

an unreserved apology for our 'misbehaviour' towards the 'newcomers' and that we would not repeat any such action in the future.

Unfortunately, none of the ring leaders agreed to this course of action and we tried to convince Prof Bibile that our action was justified and any apology was unwarranted, in spite of the gentle warning given by him of potentially serious consequences that may follow if we did not comply with his advice.

Two days later, we received individual letters from the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Colombo at the request of the University Senate, with the following contents:

- Two weeks of suspension from Medical Faculty lectures and attendance at clinical assignments,
- Fine of Rs 100,
- Immediate vacation from Bloem hostel which was to be 'out of bounds',
- All student bursaries cancelled with immediate effect.

This was the biggest fine imposed by the University Senate at the time.

We had little choice to challenge this severe punishment and realised our folly in not listening to the sane and mature advice given by Prof. Bibile. To this day we are still unsure if the Vice-Chancellor had any role to play with the severity of the punishment.

The after-effects of this serious punishment were quite devastating, financially costly, physically and emotionally traumatic and a great shock to all those who lost bursaries.

Finding alternative suitable boarding houses was difficult, disadvantageous, and time-consuming. Disruption to our studies was both upsetting and frustrating.

We repeatedly offered our sympathies to all those who lost their bursaries especially because many of them did not actively participate in the 'free for all' but remained as silent observers but fully supportive of our united action.

To leave you on a positive note, the majority of

the batch/college mates from College House remained quite sympathetic to our unexpected fate. Almost all of them, who are still with us, remain close friends.

All 50 of the expelled Bloemites eventually completed undergraduate studies successfully.

We know many of those who we could not be persuaded to join Bloem during our stay prior to the expulsion, subsequently were delighted to join the reorganised Bloem in the multi-storeyed building and were proud to identify themselves as Bloemites. To my understanding, the hostel rag still continues to this day.

Many of us after qualifying as practising doctors have served Sri Lanka in various capacities. Quite a significant number of the original 50 Bloemites are no more with us and our thoughts are with them. Like many others, I resigned from the Government Service and left Sri Lanka in 1976, after serving 10 long years in different districts as DMO and finally as MOH.

I was fortunate to find a regular post as an SHO in Paediatrics immediately after my arrival in the UK in 1976 and also was fortunate to be successful in getting 'higher Paediatric training', reaching the final step as a full-time consultant paediatrician in the NHS for nearly 30 years.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to accommodate a number of postgraduate trainee doctors from Sri Lanka to complete their overseas training in Paediatrics in my Paediatric Department over the years.

In spite of these few blemishes, we are eternally grateful to all our clinical and academic teachers for their devotion and basic comprehensive training as budding doctors during our undergraduate years. The hostel provided us with a cosy and a bonded home atmosphere with its comradery and brotherhood. I still remember my Bloem days with fondness despite being one of the ring leaders of that fateful rag in 1963.

Story by Dr Charith Nanayakkara

Consultant Paediatrician (Retd.)

MBBS (Ceylon); DCH(Lond); MRCP(UK); FRCP; FRCPCH

Would Sri Lanka Have Been Governed Better?

The 100th anniversary celebrations of the Colombo Medical Faculty were held in June 1970. This was just after the historic election where Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike gained the majority in the parliament and therefore was to be invited to form the government by the Governor General of Sri Lanka, Mr William Gopallawa. The newspapers were full of the impending call of the Governor General to “.. call upon leader of the party that won the most votes to form a Government”.

The Medical Faculty 100th Anniversary Celebrations were for us students the foremost focus of attention at that time and events such as National Elections were not allowed to disturb the celebrations. The Governor General had been scheduled to visit the medical exhibition (inspecting what was being exhibited in each department), tour the faculty, meet the staff etc. The Dean of the Faculty was Prof Stanley Dissanayake (who had an animal malaria species named after him) and the first in the line of distinguished malariologists that the Faculty has produced.

The agenda of the visit of the Governor General was clearly laid out and displayed on the noticeboard that was on the side of the elevator in the Administrative Block. It began with the

2.30pm Dean meets and greets the Governor General,
and the last item was

4.30pm The Governor General has tea with the Faculty Staff in
the Senior Common Room.

Penned in neatly after that, presumably by a Medical Student was:

5.00pm The Governor General invites the Dean to Form a
Government.

What a lost opportunity!

Sri Lanka could have been a better governed country if that invitation had been extended!!

O tempora, O mores !!

A Fresher of the 1969 Batch

News from Our Students

“Aging With Grace” – Golden Z club

This was a social media-based program targeting health promotion in Sri Lanka's growing elderly population, spanning from 01.10.2021 to 07.01.2022. The project consisted of a series of health promotion posts on relevant topics such as physical health, mental health and exercise. Two short videos, on the topics of ensuring adequate nutrition in the elderly population and physical exercises relevant for them, were also produced and released on 02.12.2021 and 07.01.2022. This was accompanied by a social media-based family challenge on healthy eating, with the participation of 53 families. With the completion of the social media campaign, a newspaper article on the project is pending publication in the Sunday Times and its sister newspapers. The informative content produced in the social media campaign is to be distributed among registered Elders' Clubs throughout Sri Lanka, through HelpAge Sri Lanka, our primary networking partner for this project.



“She Does It All” – Golden Z club



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This is a social media campaign to be followed up by an onsite event celebrating the paid and unpaid labour of women in Sri Lanka. For the social media campaign we are focusing on women employees in 3 selected sectors - garment sector, midwifery and estate sector. These will be done in 3 phases by releasing video interviews of ground level workers and management personnel in each sector. The 1st phase, involving the garment sector, was carried out by releasing interviews of employees of a locally owned garment factory, on 6th March 2022. This will be followed up by a brief on-site event on the 1st of May for both employed and unemployed women of a chosen MOH area as an appreciation of their paid and unpaid labour in the workplace and at home.

Thai Pongal Festival – Medical Students' Hindu Union

In order to celebrate the Pongal Festival, the Medical Students' Hindu Union, University of Colombo, organized the annual "Pongal Vizha" of the year 2022, which was celebrated on January 14th, 2022, from 8.00 am to 10.00 am at the Faculty of Medicine premises. The Dean, Professor Vajira H.W. Dissanayaka, the Senior Treasurer of the Society, Professor Shalini Sri Ranganathan, Consultant Dr. S. Sivaganesh, and Dr.S.Ahalya, along with around 80 students from various religions, attended the event. The event started with preparing pongal rice. The pongal rice was offered to the sun and prayers were held. After the completion of the religious prayers, Srithusan Kanagarajah of 2017 A/L, delivered the welcome speech. The Dean, Professor Vajira H.W. Dissanayaka, and Senior Treasurer, Professor Shalini Sri Ranganathan, delivered speeches and congratulated the organizers on a well-organized event following a long period of pandemic. Then, pongal rice was offered to guests and students. Finally, the event concluded with vote of thanks by Abirame Ganeshalingam of 2018 A/L batch.



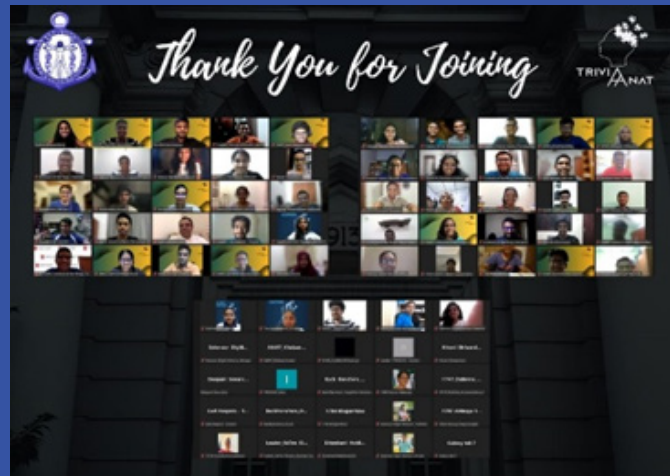
Anat-AV – Anatomical Society

Anat-AV was a project mainly focused on helping our batchmates face an anatomy VIVA. The current series of the project consisted of 4 videos regarding the bones of the lower limb namely-Femur, Patella, Fibula, and Tibia. Along with the support of the 2019 batch and the Anatomy department, the video series was deemed successful by our viewers. Upon the conclusion of the series on the 22nd of January 2022, we also managed to reach 1000 subscribers on our official YouTube channel (ANAT-AV).



Trivia Anat - Anatomical Society

Trivia Anat was an online quiz competition that aimed to impart knowledge regarding the subject of anatomy using a lively, enjoyable, and interesting approach. The event consisted of questions encompassing a wide variety of topics ranging from history of anatomy to modern surgical procedures, and it was attended by the Dean, lecturers of the anatomy department, and the students of the faculty from multiple batches. The event was held on the 8th of January 2022, and it was an extraordinary success to the extent where most of the participants remained after the official conclusion of the event in order to enjoy the questions that were unused due to time constraints.



AN-ART-TOMY - Anatomical Society



An-Art-Tomy was an Anatomy-themed virtual art competition, and its inaugural iteration was held in the month of January 2022. This competition was open to 2020 A/L medical students from different universities across the island. Contestants were informed that it would be an open competition for any type of artwork including digital, hand drawn crayons etc. After processing the art sent by the contestants, they were uploaded to the official Facebook page of the Anatomical society and voting was open on 12 noon of 22nd January. The project was deemed a success and received special praise from the Anatomy department. It also managed to increase the engagement on the official Facebook page of Anatomical society.

Project Sagna – Rotaract Club



A budding artist receiving his award by the Dean of Faculty of Medicine

After the conclusion of the successful first phase, preparations for the second phase of Sagna 2.0, the “Beyond the Voice” talent show, began in early November. The competition was opened to all individuals with hearing disabilities. Submissions were accepted under the age categories of 6-9 years, 10-13 years, 14-17 years, 18-21 years and open. Artworks and video submissions of dance performances and theatrical performances were accepted, from the 13th of November 2021 to the 10th of December 2021. Each week three artworks were posted, and all the submissions were sent for evaluation by a panel of judges. An onsite Talent Show was held on the 16th of January 2022, where the best contestants of the dance and theatrical performance categories, showcased their talents and the winners were announced.



Talent transcends boundaries



The “Silent” Drama with Sign Language dialogues



A day where every heart was filled with genuine contentment

Project Sayuru Pawura – Rotaract Club

Our latest project under ‘Sayuru Pawura’ was the ‘Dive against debris’ beach cleanup and snorkeling training session held on 4th of February at Hikkaduwa. Having a group of youth from Rotaract Clubs of 5 faculties of University of Colombo namely, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Management and Finance who dedicated their time and energy was the strength in us. The cleaning was thorough, and we were able to collect over 5 kg of PET bottles, 9 kg of glass bottles, and 3 kg of metal cans within few hours. We handed over 17 kg of recyclable trash to authorized recyclers and over 15 kg of biodegradable waste to the local council. We also trained over 20 students the correct techniques of snorkeling. The clean-up was a huge success and many locals in Hikkaduwa and ocean conservation organizations commended our work there.



Our amazing team and the culmination of their hard work in the form of more than 25kg of debris collected and given to be recycled.



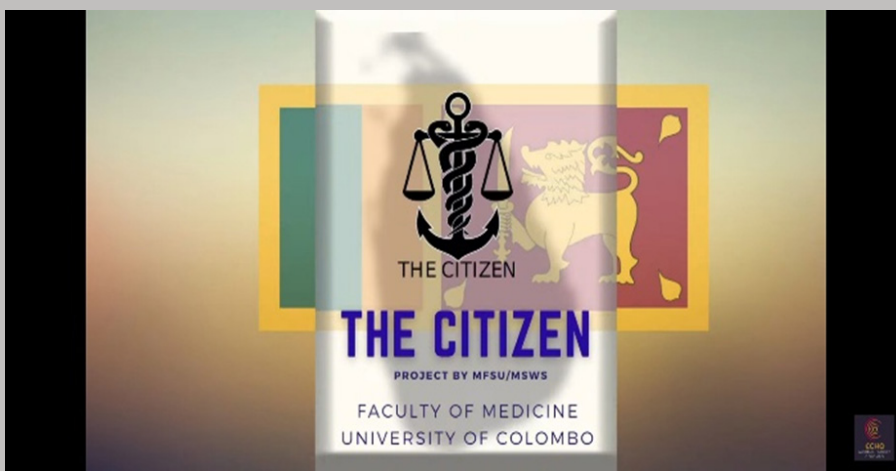
One of the lucky participants who won a free snorkeling training session

Diving in search of debris



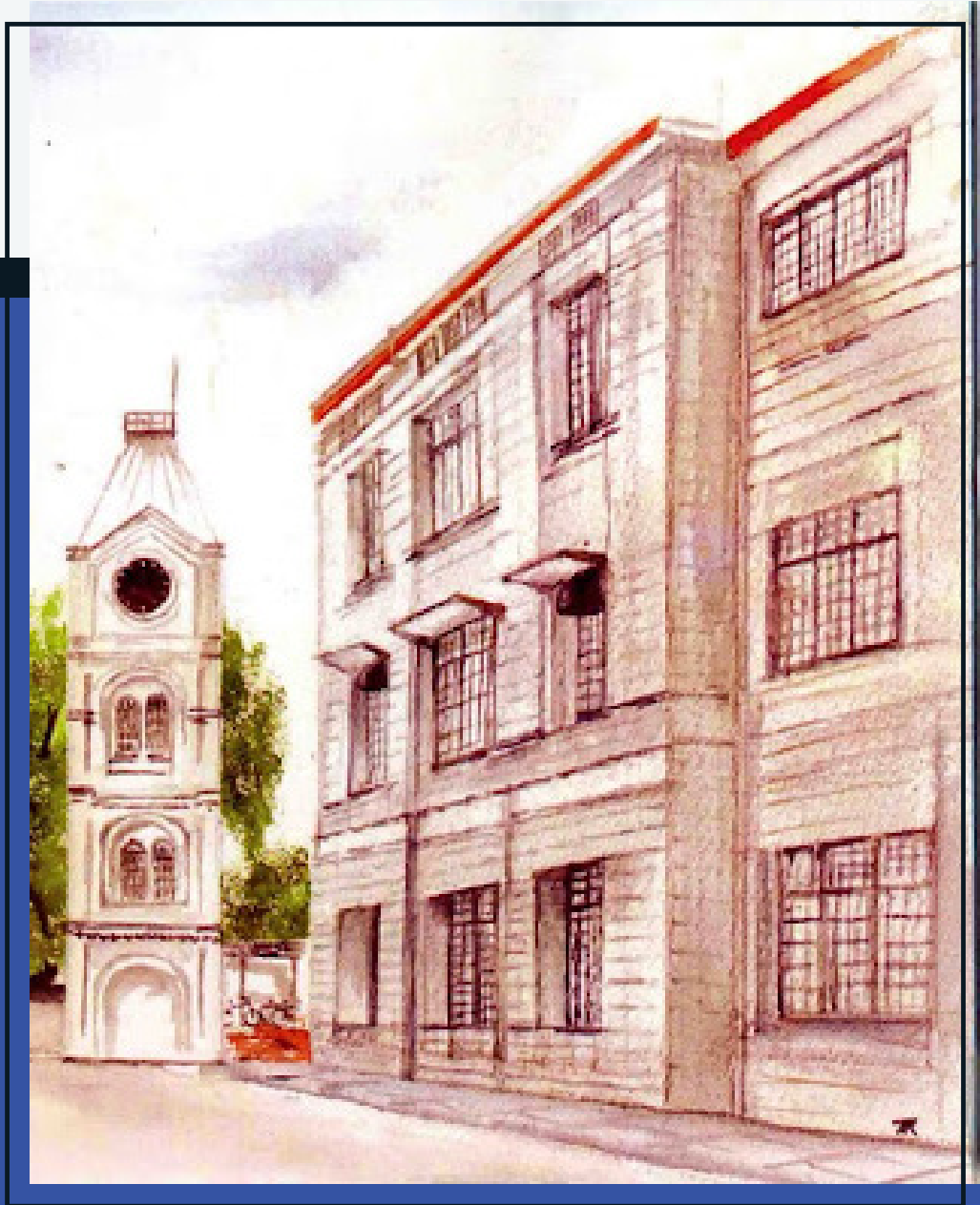
The Citizen – MFSU/MSWS

“The Citizen”, an initiative by MFSU/MSWS is a project that aims to educate medical faculty students of basic legal knowledge that’s required as both, future health care providers and responsible citizens. The project consists of a series of lectures that will be delivered by experts in the field and Q&A sessions to clarify any doubts. The opening lecture of the series was delivered by Prof. Vajira Dissanayake under the topic “ Sri Lanka Medical Council - what a doctor needs to know”. It was held as an online event on the 22nd of February with the participation of many students through zoom and MFC Echo YouTube channel. The event concluded with a very good response and feedback from the audience. The second lecture of the series was held on 12th of March by Prof. Indika Karunathilake on the topic “The career pathway of a medical student after graduation”. The audience actively asked questions and were able to get clarifications and answers for their doubts.



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.



We thank our alumni and students who provided articles for this issue and Sajith Mayantha of A/L 2013 batch for the beautiful photograph used in the cover page.

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