



Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association Newsletter - 2020

Message from the President

At the time I pen this message on 4th July 2020, there are a total of 10,842,028 cases of coronavirus infected patients and 521,277 unfortunate deaths from this infection as reported across the world. Crossing all boundaries – indeed this virus has affected all of us globally!! As medical front liners, we are committed to ensure the health of the people in general, but in the meantime we also need to adhere to our mission to improve the bond among the alumni, the organization and students, while ensuring that the vision and mission



of the PeMSAA continues. We maintained our ongoing support and care for the medical students at both undergraduate and post graduate level, and this has been greatly facilitated by our branches in the UK and Australia. Due to the evolving global pandemic, we had to slow down our efforts to organize the PeMSAA Congress, which was due to be held on the 21st of July 2020. It was a challenging time for all of us but we realized that it is even more challenging for some undergraduate students. The faculty embarked on online teaching and as a result, meeting the needs of the students became even more challenging, as there are diverse requirements that need to be met in continuing this mode of teaching. We managed to navigate the requirements of students who had difficulty adjusting, and organized financial help for them to fulfill their needs, for ex- ample by means of acquiring computers. Along with this assistance, cash donations organized by the PeMSAA council members for needy students are highly appreciated. We discussed measures that could be implemented to help students to continue their studies and as a result the newly introduced PeMSAA bursary scheme was established. We managed to organize 44 bursaries and a further 20 more are to be awarded. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the benefactors involved in this program. I would also like to note that we are also still engaged in strengthening the PeMSAA studentship fund. Many members are involved in these activities and I'm very grateful to the Dean, our council members, the Chairmen of the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Dr. Manoji Pathirage and our admirable treasurer Prof. Kapila Gunawardane. The help extended by PeMSAA-UK to medical students, by presenting valuable scholarships to those who are high achievers and also to those with economic constraints, as well as the scholarships for postgraduate trainees for their training and education by offering funding to promote research and development, are some of these remarkable successes. Notable additions to these activities are the Professor Panabokke Memorial Scholarship, the Stethoscope Fund and book donations. The lineups of some of our events so far in which we embrace all stakeholders are included separately in the newsletter: Times are changing quickly with the future unknown, but we will do our best to maintain and continue the mission and vision of PeMSAA. I am sure that this council will be leaving with a record and a legacy to be continued that makes us proud! Thank you.

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Covid 19 vs mental health of Children

Reset your world. It has been repeatedly said that the COVID-19 pandemic has reset the world. It has affected not only the physical wellbeing, but also the social and psychological wellbeing of individuals; however, the latter two aspects have been given less attention. It is high time for us to reset our personal world and make a better tomorrow for our children.

Multiple measures have been introduced in order to restrict movement as part of efforts to reduce the number of individuals infected with COVID-19. This led to tremendous changes in daily routines. While gradually adapting to altered life circumstance, new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling for children, and lack of physical contact with kith and kin, will take time to get used to. It is speculated that these health care measures may become the new lifestyle for the next few years. While adapting to lifestyle changes such as these, the workers of essential services including health care will have to face an additional risk of contracting the virus and anxiety about their families, who are particularly vulnerable. This article is mainly dedicated to the establishment of mental health and wellbeing of children of health care workers in the frontline of the COVID – 19 battle.

It is important to discuss about ensuring mental health and wellbeing of children who are at home, but it is mandatory to look after the mental health and wellbeing of health care workers.

There are many steps a health care worker can take to ensure their mental health and wellbeing is optimal, while engaging in service during this pandemic.

Keep informed. Listen to advice and recommendations from authorities. Follow trusted news channels and keep up-to-date with the latest news.

Minimize newsfeeds. Try to reduce how much you watch, read or listen to news that makes you feel anxious or distressed. Seek the latest information at specific times of the day, once or twice a day if needed.

Get support. Pause and seek support if you are feeling overburdened. Do not minimize the fears, anxieties or exhaustion. Always talk with a senior or with a psychiatrist and this may help to reduce your worries.

Look after your health. If you are already on medication either for a medical or psychological issue, do not neglect treatment.

Social contact is important. If your movements are restricted, keep in regular contact with people close to you by telephone and online channels.

Alcohol and drug use. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink or don't drink alcohol at all. Don't start drinking alcohol if you have not drunk alcohol before. Avoid using alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with fear, anxiety, boredom or social isolation.

Have a routine. Keep up with daily routines as far as possible. If your previous routine was not healthy, try to adopt new activities. Getting up and going to bed at similar times every day, keeping up with personal hygiene, eating healthy meals at regular times, exercising regularly, allocating a family time and time for resting, and making time for recreational activities are some tips to promote better health.

Screen time. Be aware of how much time you spend in front of a screen every day. Make sure that you take regular breaks from on-screen activities.

Social media. Use your social media accounts to promote positive and hopeful stories. Make sure what you post is clear and correct.

Help others. If you are able to, offer support to people in your community who may need it, such as helping them with food shopping.

Spiritual health. Practicing activities related to your religion and mindfulness will help to promote spiritual health.

It is natural for children to seek more of your attention at this time of stress. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in stress in children throughout the world. Children of essential care workers, those who are quarantined or taken to custody during the pandemic and children who are already subjected to adverse life experiences are considered more vulnerable.

There are many simple steps which can be taken to improve the mental health of children during this time.

Give information. Discuss about the pandemic with your children in an honest way, using age-appropriate language. Do not expose them to unnecessary information.

Keep a routine. Maintain familiar routines as much as possible, or create new ones, especially if parents are away from home due to work commitments.

Structure the day. Make sure that children follow a routine. Specify a bed time. It is wise to get them up from bed on the usual school days at a fixed time. If not, it will be difficult for them to re-adjust when schools start.

Be available. If you have work commitments, make sure your children get enough supervision from a responsible adult. Be with your children whenever possible and use that time to exchange love and care. Converse with them nicely through phone conversations even though you are busy with work.

Specify study time. Support your children with at-home learning and make sure time is set aside for play.

Add creativity. Help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing or drawing, can help with this process.

Be connected. Help children stay in contact with friends and family members through telephone and online channels.

Screen time. Online teaching is done daily or frequently due to closure of schools. Most parents now face difficulty in limiting screen-time for their children, as it is also essential for learning in the current context. If the child needs a device for school work it is wise to observe the child while he or she is studying online.

Make sure that your children have time away from screens every day. Spend time doing off-line activities together.

Improve skills. Do something creative with your children. Drawing a picture, writing a poem, gardening, fixing your vehicle, making food, singing or dancing, or playing in your garden will improve life skills for your child as well as the quality of your relationship with your children. Always appreciate and positively appraise their achievements.

Avoid video games. Online games and video games are highly addictive. Therefore it is advisable to keep children away from video and online games as far as possible.

Look for symptoms. Children who have a susceptibility for mental health problems might start showing signs and symptoms of distress during this stressful period. If your child is already on medication for any mental health condition, it is best to continue it according to medical advice. Children with obsessive compulsive traits might become more distressed with current instructions on regular cleaning. If your child appears to be different from his or her usual self, do not hesitate to seek medical or psychiatry advice.

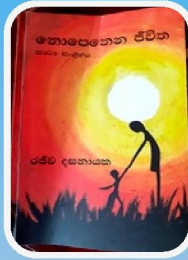
Dr Rasitha Perera,
Consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist,
SBSCH - Peradeniya

Beyond Medicine - contributions to Sri Lankan literature by alumni

Nopenena Jivitha

"Nopenena Jeevitha" is a collection of poetry, written by me. It is my first non-medical publication. The book contains 49 short poems. It was published by S. Godage publishers.

Rajeewa Dassanayake



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කිසියම් සමාජයක පූර්ණ සංවර්ධනය සඳහා විද්‍යාවේ හා තාක්ෂණයේ මෙන්ම කලාවේ දියුණුව ද අවශ්‍ය ය. ප්‍රීතිමත් ජීවිතයක් ගතකරන්නට බුද්ධියේ සහ හදවතේ සුසංයෝගී ගුණය ද තිබිය යුතු ය. විශේෂඥ -වදාය රජීව දසනායකයන්ගේ "නොපෙනෙන ජීවිත" නමින් යුත් මෙම පද්‍ය සංග්‍රහය තුළින් ගම්‍යමාන කරන්නේද එකී අදහසම ය. සෑම අයකු තුළම කිසියම් නිර්මාණ ශක්තියක් සැඟවී ඇති බව විටහාගතහොත් එය අධ්‍යයනය හා සන්නාහනය මගින් වැඩිදියුණු කරගත හැකි වෙයි. ප්‍රතිභා ශක්තිය හෙවත් තෙවැනි අසක් ඇති කවියා අප ජීවත් වන ලෝකයේ වටාපිටාවෙන් ලබා ගන්නා විවිධ අත්දැකීම් තම නිර්මාණ සඳහා පාදක කරගනියි. රජීව දසනායකයන්ගේ මෙම පද්‍ය සංග්‍රහය තුළ ද එකී ලක්ෂණය දක්නට ලැබෙයි. එහිදී වඩාත් අගය කටයුතු ලක්ෂණය වන්නේ එම අනුභූතීන්හි ඇති නව්‍යත්වය සහ ඒවා ඉදිරිපත් කො ඇති ආකාරයේ අපූර්වත්වය යි. ඔහුගේ පද්‍ය නිර්මාණ සහාදයින්නේ හදවත් කම්පනයට පත්කො රසය මෙන් ම ජීවිතාවබෝධය ද ලබා දෙන්නට සමත් වෙයි. ප්‍රවීණ ගීත රචක - මහින්ද දිසානායක



Anecdotes from a surgeon's life in Sri Lanka

By : Prof. Channa Ratnatunga.

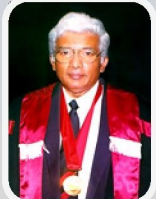
The hectic demands of an exacting career often present situations that are anecdotal. In some instances, though one contemplates writing down the memorable features of the episode, time is short, and life moves on.



When circumstances permitted the author time, in what was a busy schedule, to pen down some anecdotal tales that peppered his surgical career, the opportunity was seized.

Many are the memorable vignettes in the life of a surgeon. The training to be a surgeon is a long process but often, anecdotally fertile. His subsequent career is also punctuated by unusual happenings, as one deals with the human condition at its extreme.

Some episodes, on introspection, often carry lessons that enable the surgeon to better serve his future patients. Some are anecdotally amusing, depicting the myriad beliefs that are our cultural legacy. Professor Channa Ratnatunga relates through a series of anecdotes, his nearly five decades of experience as a surgeon in various parts of Sri Lanka



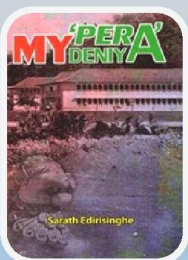
My Peradeniya

I am delighted to share with my fellow Peradeniya Medical School alumni a book that I penned. My Peradeniya is a semi-biographical narration about the Second Medical School (as it was called in the sixties) and the vast changes that took place in the Peradeniya Medical Faculty, including social, physical and geographical changes that took place over a period of nearly 50 years.

Prof. Sarath Edirisinghe

A write up by Prof S.A.M.Kularatne follows .

The possessive nature of the book title expresses the deep bond of the writer with the University of Peradeniya, the very place he commenced his reading in 1963; the "alma mater" for countless number of learners since its inception in 1942. The vivid and stunning memory blended with sheer interest in history, with a visionary mind and wisdom, the authors' saga is a masterpiece that tells many hitherto unknown historical and social details enriching readers' cognition with enlightening feelings.



The narrative begins with "The road to campus" and ends with "End of a Journey-Goodbye to My Shoebox" that creates a train of visual images of places, people, environs and social affairs in the readers' mind, like seeing a television display covering over six decades. Former Merit Professor of the University of Peradeniya, Consultant Medical Parasitologist, Sarath Edirisinghe, the author of this colourful tale is an exemplary being, an esteemed teacher and mentor for many generations of medical graduates; a passionate historian, a *rara avis* detected in the medical profession. He has taken lessons from great writers in the distant past e.g. Robert Knox (An Historical Relation of Ceylon in 1681), De Queyros (1687), Robeiro (1622) to mention a few, and their personal narratives remain authentic documents perused by millions of readers in the past and present.

My 'PERADENIYA' emulates such documents, and will remain in the repositories for posterity. I take this opportunity to wish a rewarding life for Professor Sarath Edirisinghe and hope that he will continue his literary career unhindered and share his knowledge and wisdom with fellow humankind.



Prof. SAM Kularatne

Senior Professor of Medicine

University of Peradeniya - August,2020

PeMSAA List of activities 2019/2020

For undergraduate students:

1. Career Guidance Programme in 2019 and 2020
2. Continuation of the PeMSAA Revision Lecture series for final year undergraduates
3. Sponsoring of Undergraduate Research Day – 2019
4. Contributed for developing the recreational area "Magul Maduwa"

Educational Events for Postgraduates and Young Alumni Members

5. Workshops
 1. Triage and Trauma Hands-on Workshop
 2. SPSS Workshop
 3. Essentials in Newborn Care Workshop
6. Young Alumni Forum to provide platform for them to share their experiences and motivate the undergraduate students
7. Talk by president of PeMSAA UK, Dr Krish Radhakrishna titled, "Preparation for Visiting the West"

Contribution to improvement of the educational standards of the faculty

8. Panel Discussion on Clinical Teaching with the involvement of resource persons from the University of Cambridge. This comprised 250 participants, academic staff and extended clinical teachers

Refining Soft Skills with PeMSAA

9. The PeMSAA Christmas Carol program at the elders home was organized in partnership with the Kandy Society of Medicine
10. Sponsoring the book launch of a medical student, Mr. Shehan Dahanayake

Social programmes aimed at improving networking among alumni

11. The first Annual Trip was organized to Trincomalee, along with a beach clean-up operation as proposed by the PeMSAA Member Dr Udeni Dassanayake
12. The donation of Rs. 50,000/= to the faculty cricket team for sports equipment by 80/81 Batch
13. "Fitness Center" was handed over to the students and staff of the Faculty of Medicine

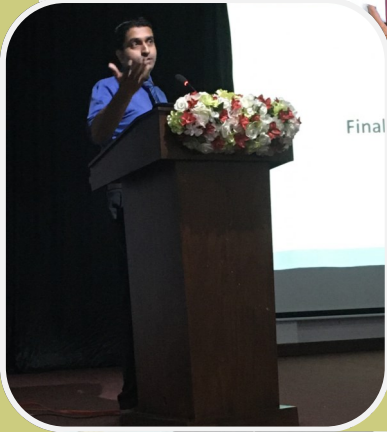
To the General Public

14. A Rupavahini Programme involving many members to cover many areas of health concerns was organized with the support from council member Dr. Iranga Madushan

Some events that would be re-scheduled

1. Regional sessions at TH Kurunegala in collaboration with the Kurunegala Clinical Society
2. First Aid Workshop for Medical Students
3. Musical event – PeMSAA EVE
4. A program to Improve of English Language Skills in Students





PeMSAA Events



2019
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2020



Upcoming Events

15th International Medical Congress
Scheduled for 2021
Stay tuned for further details

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