



Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association Newsletter - 2021

Message from the President

The vision and mission of the PeMSAA have continued since the last newsletter on the same path of progress despite the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

Our council has tried to draw attention to several important issues, and in doing so over the last two years, we have conducted many webinars, seminars, and workshops. One of our significant contributions in this area resulted from the program of "My batch with our PeMSAA".



We are truly overwhelmed by the transfer of knowledge that took place due to these programs that featured alumni experts from around the world. I congratulate the organizers of all these webinars for their painstaking efforts in engaging members from around the world on a common interactive platform.

Even though we are surrounded by this global pandemic, which has limited social activities, we could still host the first-ever PeMSAA Eve!

This program was first given in our annual schedule to be carried out as an open stage performance with musical participation. Unfortunately, we had to slow down our efforts, but nevertheless, we still managed to organize this on a virtual platform that is a new experience to showcase our member talents.

I should not forget our overseas partnership with Dr Krish Radhakrishna from the PeMSAA UK and President PeMSAA Australia for organizing participation and publicity.

We should be happy that our graduates are highly recognized worldwide because of the excellent training and the holistic approach given by our medical faculty to enhance medical knowledge and hands-on clinical training. The PeMSAA acts as a catalyst in implementing specific provisions to promote educationally sound students.

Our members are requested to join hands with their brethren in the alumni for this endeavour, and please remember that our youngsters future lies on this.

My tenure was made comfortable and successful by an excellent council, especially our young, energetic and elegant secretary of the PeMSAA, Dr Vasana Kiridena.

The strength of the association is unity, which was proved true again by my council and the past presidents in terms of guidance and support offered. I am sure this spirit will continue to flourish in the future, as well.

Committee 2019/2020

President:

Prof. Vasanthi Pinto

Vice Presidents:

Dr. Dushantha Madagedara

Dr. Manjula Herath

President elect:

Prof. Thushara Kudagammana

Past President:

Prof. P.V.R. Kumarasiri

Secretary:

Dr. Vasana Kiridana

Assistant Secretaries:

Dr. Mohan Dias

Dr. Neranjan Dissanayake

Treasurer:

Prof. Kapila Gunawardana

Assistant Treasurer:

Dr. Manoji Pathirage

Editor:

Prof. Thilini Rajapakse

Social Secretaries:

Dr. Pathum Dissanayake

Dr. Sandaya Bandara

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Prof. Kalana Maduwage

Dr. Indu Nanayakkara

Dr. Sakunthala Peiris

Dr. Anura Rajapaksa

Dr. S.B.Etulgama

Dr. Kanchana Edirisinghe

Dr. Sameera Wasala

Dr. Nadee Ratnayaka

Dr. Neileeka Madawala

Dr. Iranga de Silva

Dr. Devani Dissanayaka

Dr. Veranja Liyanapathirana

Dr. Dinesha Ambagaspitiya

Dr. Chathura Rathnayake

Faculty Representative:

Prof. Thilak Jayalath

Dean Medicine:

Prof. Asiri Abeyagunawardana

Advisory panel:

Prof. Neelakanthi Ratnatunga

Prof. Chandra Abeysekera

Dr. Eranthi Samarakoon

Dr. Palitha Abeykoon

Dr. Harith Wimalaratne

My Batch with our PeMSAA—Webinar series

Webinar 1; A Kick Start to the 50 (90/91 batch)

Coordinators

Prof Thushara Kudagammana
Dr Vasana Kiridana

Resource people

Dr Kapila Banduthilaka
Dr. Sudath Ranmulu
Dr. Upul Madahapola

Webinar 2; Red Flags in Medical Disorders- Tricks and Tips (85/86 batch)

Coordinators

Dr Manil Peiris
Dr Devani Dissanayake

Resource People

Dr. Manjula Kannangara
Dr. Janaka Thennakoon
Dr. sirimevan Abeysekara
Dr. Sagarika Attudawage

Webinar 3; Life beyond 69 (69 – 74 batch)

Coordinators

Prof Chandra Waisundera/
Abesekera
Prof Ananda Wijekoon

Resource people

Dr. Hemavo Gunathilaka/Loku
Prof. Shanthi Baduge/Mendis
Dr. Ranil Abesinghe
Dr. M. Thavarajah
Dr. Jayantha De Silva
Dr.Sunil Wimalaratna

Webinar 4; The Fabulous Forty (98/99 batch)

Coordinators

Dr. Senani Egodage
Dr. Indika Mahindawansa

Resource people

Dr. Wijayasiri Wickramanayake
Dr. Gayan Dayaratna
Prof. Nadeeja Wijayatunga
Dr. Kosala Amaranayake

Webinar 5; Staying Young (89/90 batch)

Coordinators

Dr. Dhammika Somarathne
Dr. Saman Walisinghe

Resource people

Dr. Kosala Rupassara
Dr Damayanthi Rathnayake
Dr. Upali Weragama
Dr Kapila Ranasinghe

Message from the Secretary

It is with great pleasure that I pen these words for the newsletter of PeMSAA. Serving my Alma Mater over the past two years under the capable guidance of the President, Professor Vasanthi Pinto and her dedicated council has been a marvelous experience.

Among the many innovative projects undertaken by PeMSAA, the series of webinars organized under the theme “My batch with Our PeMSAA” and the “PeMSAA Eve” are the highlights of this newsletter. While thanking each and every alumnus for their immense contribution towards the success of these programmes, I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all the coordinators, resource persons and the participants of the activities accomplished during the tenure of our council.

- Career guidance programmes 2019 & 2020
- Donation of “Mangul Maduwa”, an open dining area for medical students
- Revision Lectures for Final Year medical students
- Triage and Trauma Hands on Workshop
- Workshop on SPSS
- Essentials in Newborn Care workshop
- Panel Discussion on clinical teaching (resource persons from University of Cambridge)
- Young Alumni Forum
- “Preparation for visiting west” Lecture for postgraduate trainees by President, PeMSAA UK.
- Rupavahini Programme on common health problems
- PeMSAA Christmas Carols
- Annual Trip

- Expansion of student bursary scheme.
- Donation of Rs. 50,000/= to the faculty cricket team to buy sports equipment.
- "Fitness centre" for the students and staff of the Faculty of Medicine.

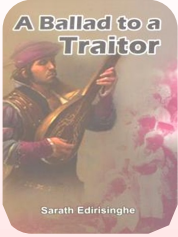


The other commendable projects completed recently are the fixing of glass table tops in the students’ cafeteria by the 1974 batch of alumni and the magnificent “Nelum Pokuna” which was generously contributed by several alumni. Both of these projects were masterminded by Professor Kapila Gunawardena. PeMSAA’s eternal commitment towards student welfare continued during the COVID 19 pandemic by donating surgical scrubs to the final year medical students. The bursary scheme continued uninterrupted and nearly 60 students became bursary recipients during 2019/2021. PeMSAA would like to invite sponsorships from alumni to enhance the bursary fund. As we handover the duties to another enthusiastic new council, we leave behind those mammoth establishments to serve our youngsters through many a generation.

Dr. Vasana Kiridana

Secretary PeMSAA 19/20

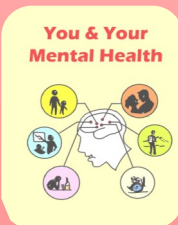
A Ballad to a Traitor



Of the twenty-one short essays covering variety of interesting historical events in Sri Lanka; the title of which, creates a puzzle in reader's mind. Where is the ballad? Who is the traitor? The author has gone into the lost past, a couple of centuries back and has attempted to do justice to history buried under the dust of antiquity. There are so many such interesting historical pieces he had written about, time to time over the past decades, but unfortunately the readers have lost easy access to them. Compiling them into a profound book is an enormous task and will last for the future generations of enthusiasts in history as an informative document for which Dr. Sarath Edirisinghe's efforts deserve much appreciation. A medical historian, a rare trait he possesses, not only an avid reader, Sarath Edirisinghe is an impressive writer. His favorable characters in the book are Robert Knox, King Rajasimha II, Rebeiro, King Sri Vikrama Rajasimha, Queen Dona Catharina to mention a few and there are many more beginnings from the ancient kingdom of Anuradhapura to the British period. The reader can catch glimpses of history from this analytical text written in scholarly English language. The chapter titled "Food and Culinary Habits of the Kandyan Peasantry in the Seventeenth Century Through the Eyes of Robert Knox" is tongue wetting. Dr. Sarath Edirisinghe, graduated from the Peradeniya Medical School in 1968 and served his alma mater as a Medical Parasitology teacher till his retirement as a Merit Professor in 2007 and later served as a Senior Consultant to the Faculty of Medicine, Rajarata University. I feel honored to write this brief review about a book of this prolific writer of our time.

SAM Kularatne,
Senior Professor, Chair of Medicine, University of Peradeniya.

You and Your Mental Health



"You and Your Mental Health" is a book written by Dr Devasmika Ariyasinghe, Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya and an alumnus of the 95/96 batch. Here, she reflects on her book.

" 'You and Your Mental Health' is a work of about 5 years. Whenever, which is most of the time, I found how uninformed the public is on mental health and related issues, I repent that I could not complete this book, which would have helped at least few of those clients; by helping them to realize that that they need help, having a mental illness is not something to be embarrassed about, the importance of involving in healthy life style in maintaining mental wellbeing. The book is in two parts: The first part talks about brain and mind, sleep, human sexuality and sexual health, couple relationship, stress, parenting, thinking styles and healthy ageing; The second part describes common mental illnesses; depression, alcohol abuse, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder and dementia. The same book is available in Sinhala as 'ඔබ සහ ඔබගේ මනසික සෞඛ්‍යය' The Sinhala book has gone for second print within a period of three months, which is an indication that the book is well received. I also think that the book will be helpful to medical professionals, especially for those who have not done a professorial appointment in psychiatry to look at patients with mental health problems with better understanding. It will be helpful for medical students as well, since the issues related to mental health and mental illnesses are described in the local context."

Gatambe Ahasa



Omesh Shehan, a fourth-year medical student of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, uses poetry as his tool to sketch out the various thoughts and feelings that cross the mind of both a poet and a medical student. His first book, "Gatambe ahasa yata" is a collection of short poems written in his mother tongue, which take the reader on a rhythmic journey while enwreathing them in the folds of modern Sinhalese literature. His collection of heartfelt pieces is the first of its kind to be written and published by a student of the fac-

"Sarasawiyama Premayak"



"Sarasaviyama premayak" is the debut novel of final year medical student, Monali Thilakarathna who takes it upon herself to give the reader a taste of the university life she was lucky enough to enjoy. Unlike the everyday romance that comes to mind when thinking of a novel based in a university, this creation encompasses the different aspects of what goes unnoticed in university life, including the various friendships and fraternities that build up over the years as well as the memories and experiences that are unique to a student of Peradeniya. Above the average love-story, it is both a fascinating read for those viewers from outside and a nostalgic one for any alum of Peradeniya.

A tribute to the dearly departed

Prof. Eugene Wickramanayake

Professor Eugene Wickramanayake's sudden death a few months back leaves a hiatus in the academic world.

She had a voracious thirst for knowledge and was a constant presence at lectures and seminars in the medical and scientific field in all genres. Prof. Wickremanayake joined the Anatomy Department of the newly established medical college in Peradeniya in the early 60's and was subsequently appointed Professor. She retired in 1999. She was a dedicated teacher and researcher with many papers to her credit. Her last project was a genetic study of the Dambana Veddahs (genetics was her chosen field of specialization).

As Emeritus professor, she made it a point to visit the Anatomy Department once a month, despite living in Colombo.

She had a brilliant academic career both in school and in the medical college, and was the first female to enter the Medical College from the Central Province. This was in 1952,

As a friend for almost a life-time, I realized she had those rare qualities—a generosity of spirit and an all-encompassing humanity.

She will be sorely missed by her family, friends and past students.

-Dr. Premini Amerasinghe

Prof. S. B. P. Athauda

Late Prof. Athauda, lovingly referred to as Parakrama, was the fourth sibling born to a well-established professional family from Mawanella. After a near perfect early education at the Kegalu Maha Vidyalaya, he graduated from the University of Peradeniya with honours in chemistry. He joined the Biochemistry Department, of the Faculty of Medicine as an academic in 1984 at an early age, and later obtained his PhD degree in 1992 from the University of Tokyo, working on 'gut acid proteinases'. After returning to Sri Lanka, he continued to work on other acid proteinases including those of HIV, trying to discover natural inhibitors, including those from '*bandura*', that could destroy targeted proteinase activity.

He was associated with large numbers of local and foreign funded research projects that resulted in promoting a research culture among young scientists. This is amply illustrated by the large numbers of MSc, MPhil and PhD research students he supervised and published in numerous refereed local and foreign journals. He was a visiting scientist and senior research fellow of many universities in the world, including those of Japan and UK.

He greatly helped the Department of Biochemistry to uplift academic levels of scientific knowledge in biochemistry and molecular biology, by being an active participant in establishing new postgraduate courses – namely Advanced Biochemistry I & II, Clinical Biochemistry and Experimental Biotechnology at the Postgraduate Institute of Science. He did this while attending to the prime duty of teaching biochemistry relevant to medical students in the Faculty of Medicine in Peradeniya.

All his work came to a sudden halt when he was 48 years, following a tragic accident in December 2010 that resulted in his demise in November 2019. He was appointed a Professor in Biochemistry in October 2009 and continued in this post until his medical retirement.

-Emeritus Prof. P AJ Perera

Dr. Thilak de Silva

Dr. Thilak de Silva who passed away about an year ago, was my batch mate and I am honoured to write this appreciation about him. He entered the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya in 1964 from Sri Sumangala College, Panadura and passed out as a doctor in 1969. He was a very friendly character who was loved by all in the batch and he used to entertain us with his jokes during free times when in company.

He took up obstetrics and gynaecology as a specialty. He worked as an obstetrician and gynaecologist at Teaching Hospital Kandy and was involved in teaching medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya for many years. Thilak was a very friendly colleague and we got along well as work mates at Teaching Hospital Kandy. He was liked very much by the staff of the operating theaters and the patients, because of his pleasing manners. He was well known for the accuracy of his ultrasound findings of patients. Later he changed his specialty to become a consultant in accident and emergency medicine in the UK. Thilak did his duty to the country as a doctor and a human being.

May he attain the bliss of Nibbana early in his journey through samsara.

-Dr Maithrie Rajapakse

Dr Neil Halpe

The late Dr. Neil Halpe is an illustrious alumnus of the Peradeniya Medical Faculty. He is a famous ruggerite produced by Trinity College, Kandy, and represented the University of Peradeniya in many sports. From his student days he wanted to become a consultant obstetrician, in order to improve the concept of safe motherhood. After completing his postgraduate training in England, he returned to Sri Lanka and served as a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist in many peripheral hospitals, where he did his best to improve the health services in the area. After retiring from government service he served his Alma Mater as a visiting Senior Lecturer. He was an excellent teacher, and a kind and compassionate doctor who was well liked, and he is remembered affectionately by his colleagues and subordinates.

-Prof Erandi Samarakone

Dr Gamini Buthpitiya

Those of us, who entered the Faculty of Medicine Colombo, in September 1969, heard of a Buthpitiya in the Peradeniya Faculty starting medical studies at the same time. We heard that he was a rather outspoken student who was already challenging his teachers. He excelled at his work at the Faculty.

Together with his general passion for life, Buttha (as he was known) was one of the best clinicians of his time and his pioneering work on the pharyngeal pump is well recognized. If I'm not mistaken, he is probably the only surgeon in Sri Lanka whose work is quoted in the famous textbook, "Bailey & Love – Short Practise of Surgery".

He was not just a clinician but was a committed environmentalist too.

I think many would agree that he was one of the best to hold the post of Dean and certainly one of the most charismatic Deans of Peradeniya. He was the incumbent Dean when the Faculty celebrated its Golden Jubilee and made us all proud of being members of the Faculty.

I will finish by letting Buttha have the last word. This was his ending to the note he wrote for to my wife and myself, on our 35th wedding anniversary album:

"More importantly in the journey through Sansara I wish I will meet both of you over and over again as Kalyana Mithra."

-Dr E. K. Rodrigo



**PeMSAA
EVE**



Leisure areas within the faculty premises built with PeMSAA contributions



Summit

Magul Maduwa



Nelum Pokuna



PeMSAA activities



President's visit to PeMSAA UK
Annual conference



Scrubs for students



Triage and Trauma
workshop



Christmas Carols



Fitness Center



Career guidance programme



“Ayuboweva”
Rupavahini programme for
general public

Presentation of Student
Bursaries



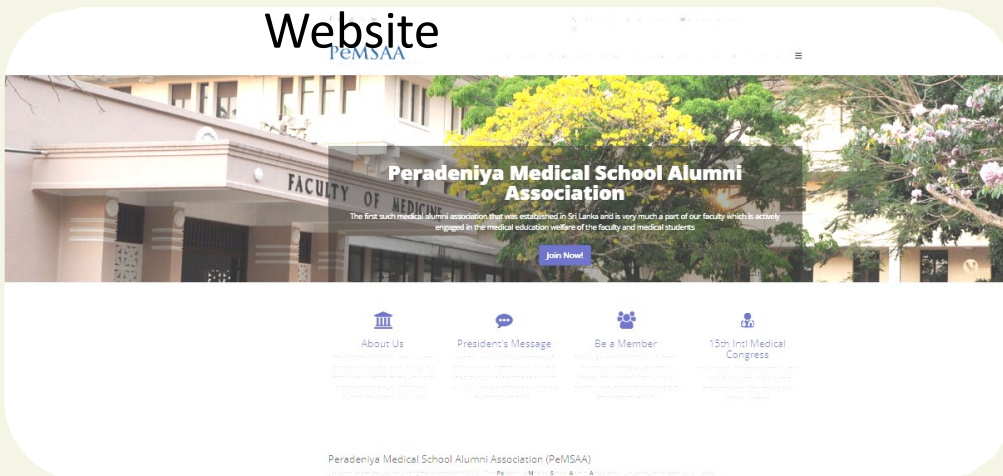
Glass table tops
Donation from 1975 batch



Annual Trip



New look to the PeMSAA
Website



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