

# Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association (PeMSAA)

Newsletter June 2021

## Committee 2021 / 2022

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*Prof. Thushara Kudagammana*

### Vice Presidents

*Dr. Saman Walisinghe*

*Dr. Indu Nanayakkara*

### President Elect

*Prof. Heshan Jayaweera*

### Past President

*Prof. Vasantha Pinto*

### General Secretary

*Dr. Champa Ratnatunga*

### Assistant Secretaries

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*Dr. Ruwan Premathilake*

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*Prof. Kalana Maduwage*

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*Dr. Sakunthala Jayasinghe*

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*Dr. Vasana Kiridana*

*Dr. Gihan Champika*

*Dr. Neranjan Dissanayake*

*Dr. Anura Rajapakse*

*Dr. Kanchana Edirisinghe*

*Dr. Priyangi Wijesinghe*

*Dr. Buddika Dassanayake*

*Dr. Iranga De Silva*

*Dr. Kasun Rambukwella*

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*Prof. Thilak Jayalath*

### Dean Medicine

*Prof. Asiri Abeyagunawardena*

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*Prof. Neelakanthi Ratnatunga*

*Prof. Chandra Abeysekera*

*Prof. Kapila Gunawardena*

*Dr. Palitha Abeykoon*

*Dr. Harith Wimalaratne*

## Message from the President

I consider it an honour and privilege to be inducted as the 15<sup>th</sup> president of PeMSAA. I stand in line with 14 eminent presidents who served this organization before me and made PeMSAA into what it is today.

I must congratulate the outgoing president Prof Vasantha Pinto and her committee for the excellent work carried out over the past two years under the trying conditions that prevailed in the country and the world. Replacing such a committee is a herculean task. I am however confident that with the dynamic council that I have, we can do justice to the faith you all have put in us by placing us at the helm of PeMSAA.

While continuing the good work of the past council we have planned a series of activities for the next two years under 3 themes. They are

1. Activities to help graduate a doctor who is humane, confident, reached their full potential and who loves the faculty.
2. Infrastructure development
3. Activities aimed at establishing PeMSAA as a powerful central organization

In addition to acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills the present day doctor needs additional help to develop soft skills to function well in the society. PeMSAA will initiate a series of activities to impart these soft skills to the graduate.

University students need and indeed thrive in a pleasant and relaxing environment. I along with my committee, will try our best to help the faculty maintain and develop its physical environment to promote learning. A Faculty beautification programme and student hub is in our priority list of activities.

Dear friends, you can count on us to plan and execute a very promising programme for the next two years. I need your fullest support to achieve our goals. Together, we will help the faculty and the Alumni, both young and not quite so young, achieve their highest goals, with a sense of community and camaraderie reminiscent of our faculty days.

Long live our faculty and PeMSAA.

**Prof. Thushara Kudagammana**  
President, PeMSAA



# 15<sup>th</sup> International Medical Congress of PeMSAA

was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at Hotel Grand Kandyan, Kandy

The congress was a great success with the presence of our Alumni, Hon. Dr. Ramesh Pathirana, Minister of Plantation as the Chief Guest, Dr. Asela Gunawardena, Director General of Health Services and Hon. Prof. Channa Jayasumana, State Minister of Production Supply and Regulation of Pharmaceuticals as the Guests of Honour. The prestigious congress lecture "Journey of Cardiology in Sri Lanka: from Grassroots to Elite" was delivered by the Consultant Clinical and Interventional Cardiologist, Dr. Vajira Senaratne.



## Achievements of Our Alumni

### WHO - "No Tobacco Award" - Dr. Palitha Abeykoon"

In recognition of his longstanding contribution to combatting tobacco use, Dr Palitha Abeykoon, former Chairman of the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA), and currently WHO Director-General's Special Envoy for COVID-19 for South East Asia, has received the 2021 WHO World No Tobacco Day Award. Dr. Abeykoon incidentally was the first medical student to be registered at the inception of the Peradeniya Medical Faculty and currently serves PeMSAA as a member of the Advisory Panel.

While being the Chairperson of NATA from 2014, he formed crucial partnerships with the health network and enforcement agencies such as the Police, Customs, and Excise and established close relationships with Civil Society Organizations to enhance advocacy and community-level interventions.

Some of the outcomes of his work through NATA include Tobacco-Free Zones in 120 towns in Sri Lanka, increased tobacco taxes as a key deterrent to tobacco use and the **FCTC Project** wherein Sri Lanka was one of 15 countries selected by WHO. His stewardship saw the total ban on all forms of smokeless tobacco, successful advocacy for pictorial health warnings and later for plain packaging and the adoption of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco.

These efforts and countless others saw cigarette sales in Sri Lanka dropping by approximately 15% and smoking being deglamorized and Sri Lanka being recognized globally as a country that is successful in tobacco control.



## Achievements of Our Alumni

### The first 5 successful local Anaesthetic only artificial heart valve implantations ( TAVI) in Sri Lanka and other Advanced cardiac procedures..."

PeMSAA alumnus, Dr Pandula Athauda-Arachchi became the first, fully independent interventional cardiologist to perform five Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantations (TAVI) under local anaesthesia for the first time in Sri Lanka. Aortic valve failures can be due to many factors including age-related wear and tear or defects from birth leading to narrowing and restricting blood flow through the systemic circulation. Every year many patients with diseased aortic valve who need a valve replacement have to undergo high risk opened-heart aortic valve replacements surgeries and eventually develop heart failure and sudden death.

Dr Athauda-Arachchi performed the replacement of the aortic valve within 90 minutes while the patient under local anaesthesia by TAVI avoiding open-heart surgeries. This procedure reduces all the risks associated with open-heart surgery and general anaesthesia. The procedure involves careful choosing and placement of balloon-expandable (MyVal or Edwards) or self-expanding transcatheter aortic heart valve after careful destruction of the diseased valve. The TAVI is performed by using inserting a catheter while the patient remains fully conscious. TAVI allows faster recovery, early mobilisation and minimum risk of infections, stroke and ventilator dependence. Furthermore, Dr Athadua-Arachchi has performed the first 7 cases of intracardiac stem cell transplantation for intractable heart failure in Sri Lanka. He is a renowned interventional cardiologist trained in the UK for 12 years and the first PeMSAA / Sri Lankan medical professional to receive the Gates-Cambridge Scholarship from the University of Cambridge. Dr Athauda-Arachchi was an Alumnus from 1995-2002 graduating with first class honours in every examination winning of 11 Distinctions and 18 Gold Medals and receiving university awards for best performance in every examination.



## An Appreciation - Professor Chelvarayan Barr Kumarakulasinghe

The demise of Prof, left us his friends, trainees and his former students with a profound sense of sadness. Prof, CBK or Barr to all of us who knew him well, was the charming competent unruffled personality who joined the staff of the Surgery department of the Faculty in 1968. He became the youngest Professor of Surgery in 1973. I had the good fortune to have been trained by him, during my early years.

He was a multi-talented surgeon, who was a 'natural' at surgery in all its aspects. He, by nature took a keen but philosophical interest in all what happened around him. Time was never scheduled in his life and students soon came to accept this as a reality. Music was his other passion and in this he had many kindred spirits among his colleagues at the time, such as Drs Mark Amerasinghe, Senake Bibile, Valetine Basnayake and Angelo Rodrigo, all of whom having this common interest. They all were our role models at the time.

The ethnic upheavals in 1983, resulted in pruning what was a promising career and in the end the Faculty losing one of its most gifted surgical teachers. His mother's house in Mount Lavinia was set on fire by a mindless rabble, because she was closely related to the Tamil Statesman, S. J. V. Chelvanayagam. We in Sri Lanka lost him as he emigrated to Australia with his family in 1984. May he be remembered by the surgical fraternity of this country for many more years to come.

**Prof. Channa Ratnatunga**



## Professor Emeritus Eugene Wickramanayake

Madam Wikramanayake as she was fondly known was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1933 in Peradeniya as Eugene Jayasekara. She was married to late Professor T. Wickramanayake a well-respected professor of Biochemistry at our alma mater and they leave behind three sons.

Having obtained her primary and secondary education at Girls' High School Kandy, madam Wickramanayake, qualified for University entrance for Medicine in 1950 becoming the first female student in the Kandy district entering science based studies to the University of Ceylon. She qualified MBBS (Cey) in 1958 with distinction and opted for an academic career in the Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya in 1962.

She read for her PhD in Human Genetics in 1968 at the University of Glasgow UK. On her return to her homeland she introduced Genetics to the medical curriculum and initiated research in Human Cytogenetics and Population Genetics in Sri Lanka. She was the recipient of the Commonwealth scholarship, University of Glasgow, 1975-1976, Senior medical fellowship, 1987-1988 and the Travel award Welcome Trust, United Kingdom, 1995.

She was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Head of the Department in 1982 and is well remembered for her practical approach to teaching anatomy. She was an avid researcher and served as Chairperson of the Faculty Research Committee for a decade. Her research interests were numerous and she published extensively both nationally and internationally. She supervised many research students and was instrumental in the initiation of the Annual Research Sessions of the University of Peradeniya. She was an active member of the KSM and the SLMA and contributed towards many research fora and academic meetings.

She retired from the University of Peradeniya in 2000 and moved to Colombo but continued to visit the faculty regularly involving herself in ongoing research. Her writing and critical thinking ability was unparalleled and she never failed to attend scientific meetings and remained alert and sharp throughout her retirement. Many of us owe our basic training in anatomy to her and we will dearly miss her critical comments and unwavering enthusiasm.

**Dr Himani Amaratunga**

Head, Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya



# PeMSAA Activities

## Faculty Beautification and Development Programme by PeMSAA



## PeMSAA Evening Talks "Alumni Giving a Helping Hand"

PeMSAA has started a series of lectures - the "PeMSAA Evening Talks" by Alumni to uplift the knowledge among medical students through the online platform Zoom. Staff members of the faculty and alumni consultants of different fields actively contribute to this teaching programme. There were three evening talks organised every week and the programme is a great success among the students with the participation of 400 - 500 students and highly enthusiastic discussion sessions. PeMSAA expresses its sincere gratitude to the following academics and clinicians who actively contributed to the "PeMSAA evening.

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|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| • Prof. Vasanthi Pinto      | [1984/85] | • Dr Asanaka Nugaliyadda      | [1999/2000] |
| • Prof. Thilak Jayalath     | [1981/82] | • Dr Sayuri Perera            | [1999/2000] |
| • Prof. Vasanthi Thevanesam | [1967/68] | • Dr Harsha Ariyaratne        | [1997/98]   |
| • Prof. Rasnayake Mudiyanse | [1977/78] | • Dr Pathum Dissanayake       | [1996/97]   |
| • Dr Champika Gihan         | [2000/01] | • Dr Pandula Athauda-Arachchi | [1995/96]   |
| • Dr Neranjan Dissanayake   | [1995/96] | • Dr. Punsiri Gunathilake     | [2000/01]   |
| • Dr Saman Senanayake       | [1979/80] | • Dr Thilak Thoradeniya       | [1991/92]   |
| • Dr Devasmika Ariyasinghe  | [1995/96] | • Dr Sajeewana Amarasinghe    | [1990/91]   |
| • Dr Vasana Kiridana        | [1992/93] | • Dr Duminda Yasarathne       | [1997/98]   |
| • Dr Jeewantha Rathnayake   | [1997/98] |                               |             |
| • Dr Chaminda Jayalath      | [1997/98] |                               |             |

**PeMSAA**  
Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association

**PeMSAA Evening Talks**  
"SENIORS SHARING EXPERIENCE"

on Saturday 15th May 2021  
from 8PM to 10PM

**PeMSAA**  
Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association

**PeMSAA Evening Talks**  
On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday  
From 8:00PM to 10:00PM

25 / 05 / 2021    27 / 05 / 2021    29 / 05 / 2021

 MCQ Tips Prof Thilak Jayalath Batch 81/82 Consultant Physician	 Postmenopausal bleeding & Cervical malignancy Dr Chaminda Jayalath Batch 97/99 Consultant Obstetrician & Gynecologist	 Abdominal trauma in surgical casualty Dr Jeewantha Rathnayake Batch 97/98 Consultant Surgeon
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Alumni giving a Helping Hand

**PeMSAA**  
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**PeMSAA Evening Talks**  
On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday  
From 8:00PM to 10:00PM

15 / 06 / 2021    17 / 06 / 2021    19 / 06 / 2021

 Obstetric Hemorrhage Dr. Punsiri Gunathilake Batch 00/01 Consultant Obstetrician & Gynecologist	 Head injury in neurosurgical practice Dr Thilak Thoradeniya Batch 91/92 Consultant Neurosurgeon	 COVID-19 essentials for medical undergraduates Dr Duminda Yasarathne Batch 97/98 Consultant Respiratory Physician
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Alumni giving a Helping Hand

## News from Overseas PeMSAA Chapters

PeMSAA-UK wishes to congratulate the current PeMSAA President Thushara Kudagammana and his new council. We wish to thank the out going President Vasanthi Pinto, the Secretary Vasana Kiridana and the council for building up the close bond and the collaborative work we were able to carry out over the last couple of years. PeMSAA-UK will continue to support and work together with PeMSAA and the Alma Mater towards achieving what we pledged in our constitution and policy.

Please visit our website to learn about PeMSAA-UK's 'Activities' under "About Us" We hosted another successful academic Webinar on 22 May; the series 2 on COVID; "Emerging Technologies in the Post COVID Healthcare" and very pleased to say that we received excellent feedback from the participants. The recording of the session is available to view at our website. We would like to draw the attention of all the Peradeniya Medical Faculty Postgraduates and Undergraduates to the "2021 PeMSAA-UK Research/Audit/Quality Improvement Project Award", Please submit your work before 31st July 2021 to avoid disappointments; the criteria and the application process can be found at our website.



PeMSAA-UK would also like to remind our alumni that the PeMSAA-UK "International Academic Conference" followed by "Professor Varagunam Memorial Lecture" and the annual Ball are scheduled for 18 September 2021 at Marlow Crowne Plaza, Buckinghamshire, UK. We are looking forward to welcoming many of you to this event. We encourage you to visit our website [www.pemsaa.uk](http://www.pemsaa.uk).

On behalf of PeMSAA-UK, I wish everyone the very best for a healthy and COVID free future.

**Krish T Radhakrishnan - President-PeMSAA-UK**



## PeMSAA - UK Academic Award 2021 - Call for applications

- Undergraduate: Medical students at Peradeniya Medical Faculty
- Be a registered associated member of the local PeMSAA
- Post Graduate: Have qualified from the Peradeniya Medical School within the last 10 years.
- Be a registered member of the local PeMSAA
- Be a fully qualified non-consultant grade doctor working in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Higher Education or as a Family Practitioner

*Closing date for applications: 31st July 2021*

*More details: please visit: [www.pemsaa.uk](http://www.pemsaa.uk)*

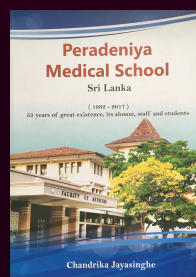
## PeMSAA Memorabilia



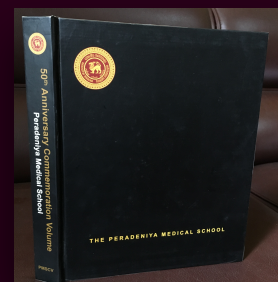
Rs. 400/=



Rs. 200/=



2000/=



4000/=

Available at PeMSAA office, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya

## Contact PeMSAA

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## Becoming a PeMSAA member

The eligibility of membership criteria would be from two main categories,

The past graduates of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya and academic staff members of the Faculty of Medicine and all the consultants (extended staff) irrespective of their faculties, who are involved in teaching of medical students of Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya and at the teaching hospitals.

Details of the membership is available at: <https://www.pemsaa.org.lk/membership/how-to-become-a-member.html>