

PeMSAA Newsletter

PERADENIYA MEDICAL SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



June 2023



Gal Bangalawa, of the University of Peradeniya

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Message from the PeMSAA President – Prof Heshan Jayaweera

I am indeed honored to be inducted as the 16th President of PeMSAA. I stand in line with 15 of my predecessors whose vision and actions has made PeMSAA into what it is today. I must thank and acknowledge the previous council led by Prof. Thushara Kudagammana for the excellent work they carried out over the past two years amidst the pandemic and the unprecedented economic crisis that gripped the country. He was ably supported by a team of dynamic people who have contributed immensely to achieve much. I am ever so glad that many of them have pledged their support to work with me, to hopefully take PeMSAA to greater heights in the next two years.

Professor Heshan Jayaweera
Professor in Paediatrics &
Hon. Consultant Paediatrician
Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya.



Let me firstly pay my sincere gratitude to all those who rallied around me and my able secretary Dr. Chaturika Dandeniya in organizing the 16th international Medical Congress of PeMSAA. It was a successful congress and I am delighted to inform the membership that we have made a profit from it, which will be utilized mainly for student welfare in the near future.

I am sure all of us currently feel a bit more comfortable now than what we did in June- July 2022. Although some aspects of life are slowly becoming normal, there remains much to be done. As an alumni association we are aware that our faculty is no exception, and my council and I will strive to do our best for our faculty to support our students and staff.

PeMSAA over the years has provided support to students with financial difficulties which was facilitated through the PeMSAA studentship and the bursary scheme. My council and I will continue to support these schemes and strengthen these further, thus supporting undergraduates to pursue their education without much burden. We are hopeful that those who receive the bursaries will be mindful of the benefits they have received and will undertake to support another individual in need upon their graduation.

It is no secret that the humane touch of the modern day medical professional is not optimal, and patient expectations of receiving holistic care is ever increasing. The recent Covid pandemic too has had a negative effect on this, as the contact of the two parties was minimal. Against this background we believe the modern day undergraduate needs to develop soft skills to ensure good interactions with those they treat. Our committee hopes to focus on this aspect and will liaise with the faculty administration to facilitate a programme to instill these soft skills in our graduates.

Successive councils have strived to make the faculty a more pleasing and comfortable environment for students to carry on their learning. PeMSAA is happy to have contributed to the infrastructure of such leisure areas and continues to support the maintenance of the faculty premises to maintain it in a pleasing manner. We have plans to develop and landscape a few new areas during our term of office to improve the atmosphere within the faculty, as we believe that a pleasant environment will foster better learning.

In the modern era continuing medical education too is an aspect that need to be addressed. We have plans to reach our membership through CME activities which will be facilitated through regional clinical societies. This I believe will enable better interaction with our membership that is scattered all over the country. We acknowledge the support of our overseas chapters and their contribution to student welfare, and I hope to further strengthen the bonds with them and plan collaborative work that would be mutually beneficial for PeMSAA and students alike.

The alumni of the Peradeniya Medical School scattered world over have been always willing to lend a helping hand to the students, the faculty and to each other whenever such support was needed. Dear Alumnus, you could count on my council to deliver a promising programme in the next couple of years, and I would like to kindly request all of you to support us in whatever possible way so that our united efforts will help to make 'Pera' a better place to live, study and enjoy life. Let me also extend an invitation to you to visit your alma mater whenever possible, rekindle your memories and witness how "Pera" has grown over half a century. Long live our faculty and PeMSAA.

Heshan Jayaweera, President PEMSAA

Antibiotic resistance – time for action

Antimicrobial resistance has become one of the imminent threats faced by the human civilization. The magnitude of the threat has been likened to that of climate change. Bacterial antibiotic resistance significantly contributes to the burden of antimicrobial resistance. Antibiotic overuse and misuse in health-care as well as in other sectors such as veterinary practice and animal-husbandry has contributed immensely to this issue. Drying up of the antibiotic development pipeline has also contributed to this problem.

Sri Lanka is at the brim of a crisis in antibiotic resistance. Emergence of resistance has now made most common bacterial pathogens - which cause not only hospital acquired infections, but even community onset infections - to become resistant to almost all available antibiotics. What many do not comprehend is the fact that antibiotic resistance not only makes treating infections difficult, but it also makes other medical interventions lose their effectiveness. For example, the outcome of procedures such as using prosthetics devices, implants, transplant surgeries and even some routine, simple surgeries depend on the availability of effective antibiotics.

Despite these catastrophic consequences, many health-care providers still continue to ignore the risk posed by antibiotic resistance, and misuse antibiotics. One major reason for this is that the impact of antibiotic resistance is not tangible. Health care providers will see deaths due to cardiac events, road traffic accidents and cerebral events. However, while they also see deaths and adverse outcomes of infections such as pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis, these are attributed to the diseases, rather than antibiotic resistance. For the first time globally, the impact of antibiotic resistance was calculated and published for data from 2019 in a paper titled “Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 2019: a systematic analysis”. For the 88 pathogen-drug combinations studied by the antimicrobial resistance collaborators for this paper, 1.27 million deaths were directly attributable to resistance, while the number of death associated to bacterial resistance is much higher. Among the regions worst affected, South Asia was a close second to the Sub-Saharan African regions (1).

The Sri Lankan situation is that of a worst-case scenario. Numerous studies published both in local and international journals clearly show that the burden of antibiotic resistance is extremely high in Sri Lanka. Leaving aside laboratory data, antibiotic use has also been identified to be high in Sri Lanka (2). Antibiotic use in the hospital setting has been identified repeatedly to be sub-optimal, with multiple areas needing improvement (3, 4). Both future and current medical professionals of the country need further training on antibiotic use (5,6,7).

However, there seems to be an element that is “lost in translation”. While the medical professionals often assume that patients demand a “capsules” or “antibiotics”, patients’ primary requirement is symptomatic relief (8). Patient’s understanding of what an antibiotic is, remains very poor (8, 9, 10). Common drugs such as paracetamol is understood to be an antibiotic by the population.

PROTECT YOUR PATIENTS, COMBAT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Actions For Healthcare Providers

You can protect your patients from antibiotic-resistant germs such as bacteria and fungi, which can cause difficult and sometimes impossible to treat infections.



Figure: Infographic by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the actions for health-care professionals in combating antibiotic resistance – Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/healthcare-providers.html>

While over work and fear of secondary bacterial infections are often cited as reasons for prescribing antibiotics for common infections that are most likely to be of viral origin such as acute respiratory tract infections (8), we can no longer afford to take the same route. It is high time to develop the confidence among medical professionals to use antibiotics only where appropriate, with a review system for patients. There are many open courses on correct prescription practices, including ones administered via the world health organization and the centers for disease control and prevention. In addition to that, many local professional colleges and international medical societies, in their continuous professional development courses include sessions on infectious diseases and antibiotic use. Local guidelines on antibiotic use are available for free access. As professionals who are meant to have developed skills needed for lifelong learning, the responsibility for updating regarding correct antibiotic prescribing practices lie with us. While correct prescribing will not change the scenario overnight, it will be the first step towards this goal.

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Veranja Liyanapathirana
Department of Microbiology
Faculty of Medicine
University of Peradeniya
2000/2001 batch



16th PeMSAA International Medical Congress 2023

'Delivering Holistic Patient Care Amidst Challenges'

PeMSAA Celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2022 and the 16th International Medical Congress was held on the 27th and 28th of April 2023. The congress chairperson Prof. Heshan Jayaweera, together with his committee including congress secretary, Dr. Chathurika Dandeniya and the rest of the PeMSAA council delivered a superb academic programme, that was well organized and well executed.



The congress week began with three very successful pre congress workshops. On the 24th Monday, the first workshop on Critical Care for Nursing officers was organized at the Skills lab at National Hospital Kandy (NHK), by Dr. Saman Walisinghe, and was attended by over 250 nursing officers from NHK, T.H. Peradeniya (THP) and Sirimavo Bandaranayake Specialized Children's Hospital (SBCH).

The second workshop on the management of surgical, gynaecological and obstetric emergencies was organized by Dr. Buddhika Dassanayake and Dr. Champika Gihan on the 25th of April at THP. The third workshop on the ABC of Paediatric and Medical emergencies, organized by Dr. S. Krishnapradeep and Prof. Manoji Pathirage was held on the 26th of April at the skills laboratory at NHK. Both workshops were fully booked and attended by 30 doctors each, and was conducted with great success.



The inauguration of the 16th International Medical Congress was held on the 27th of April at the Grand Kandyan Hotel. The occasion was graced by our chief guest, Past president of PeMSAA, Prof. N.V.I. Ratnatunga and our Guest of Honour, Past President of PeMSAA UK, Dr. Krish T. Radharkishnan. Nineteen past teachers and three outstanding performers at the 2022 final MBBS examination were felicitated at this inauguration. The PeMSAA Undergraduate Research Prize was also awarded on this occasion. The highlight of the evening was, of course, the outstanding Congress lecture delivered by Prof. Kemal Deen, on 'Three decades of battling rectal cancer'. Fellowship and dinner followed.



The academic program of the 16th International Medical Congress of PeMSAA was held on 28th of April at the Oak Rey Regency, Getambe, under the theme 'Delivering holistic patient care amidst challenges', with over 150 attendees. An excellent set of three plenary talks, addressing current

challenges and strategies for improving health care in different dimensions were delivered by global experts. Parallel symposia on medicine, surgery, paediatrics and gynaecology and obstetrics were conducted, with talks by both Sri Lankan and overseas experts. Excellent updates on day-to-day dermatology and radiology were also included to ensure a holistic programme. The two winners of the alumni innovations contest, Prof. Kalana Maduwage and Dr. Kosala Somaratne also presented their novel work, highlighting the innovative and creative work done by our alumni. Overall it was a very successful day of sessions with active participation seen from attendees, during the Q&A session of the symposia. It was an excellent academic event, led by Prof. Heshan Jayaweera, Dr. Chathurika Dandeniya, the Scientific Committee and the organizing team.



The video recordings of these sessions will be made available online soon.

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The congress week was brought to a celebratory conclusion with a *Paduru Party* ably organized by our social secretary Dr. Prabha Rathnayake, held at the Oak rey reGENCY on the night of the 27th of April. Due to the ongoing difficult financial times in the country, the council and congress committee thought it would be appropriate to forego the usual Congress Dinner, and instead to have this informal get together, to celebrate the close of a successful congress week.

A picture gallery of the highlights of the Congress events are available on the PeMSAA website <https://www.pemsaa.org.lk/congress/16th-international-medical-congress-2023.html>. The congress lecture is now available on the PeMSAA Youtube channel as well.

Champa N Ratnatunga
Department of Microbiology
Faculty of Medicine
University of Peradeniya
Secretary PEMSAA 2020-2022
2001/2002 batch



Recent PeMSAA organized events:

Seniors Sharing Experiences



PeMSAA moderated the event 'Seniors Sharing Experience' successfully again this year. This is a platform introduced for the highest performing fresh graduates to speak frankly to their junior colleagues on the challenges they faced and strategies they used from a young graduate's perspective.

SENIORS SHARING EXPERIENCES
Alumni giving a helping hand...

How to use the Prof appointments effectively

22nd June | 4.30 pm | Physiology Lecture Theatre

How to plan the study leave

How to face the different components of the exam

Followed by a one-on-one personal discussion with them!

and much more...

Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association

The poster features a yellow background with various medical and educational icons like a microscope, books, and a clock. It lists the event details and topics to be discussed. There are illustrations of students and a stack of books.

The discussion was held on the 22nd of June 2023, at the Physiology Lecture theatre at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya. Eleven students from the 2015/16 batch, who graduated with first class honours in the last final MBBS examination held in March/April 2023, participated as resource personnel. This was well-attended, with enthusiastic questions from the audience during the highlight of the event - one-on-one discussions with the students, arranged by the resource persons within the calming environs of the Pillard area and the Latha Mandapaya.

A video recording of the event will be available through the PeMSAA YouTube channel soon.



Some important messages for you..

1. Plan your work. DON'T WASTE TIME!!
2. Don't ignore your physical and mental health
3. Believe in yourself. Be Confident. "YOU CAN DO IT"

A man in a maroon shirt is standing at a podium on a stage, speaking into a microphone. Behind him is a large screen displaying the text from the slide. The stage has a decorative railing.

News from overseas PeMSAA Chapters:

Celebrating Success: A recap of the 7th PeMSAA Australasia Conference – Sydney Australia, 8-9th October 2022

Introduction

It is with great joy and pride that I look back on the incredible success of the 7th PeMSAA Australasia conference, held at the prestigious Sofitel Darling Harbour in Sydney, Australia, over two days in October 2022. Despite the challenges posted by the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple cancellations, the organising committee's unwavering determination and resilience shone through, resulting in a truly remarkable event. This conference serves as a testament to the power of unity and collaboration among the Fellows of PeMSAA, showcasing what can be achieved together with a shared goal in mind. It brought together medical professionals, teachers, students, batchmates and senior colleagues, providing a program for knowledge exchange, professional development, community building and laughter. Let us take a moment to celebrate the highlights and achievements of the exceptional gathering and the impact it made on the PeMSAA community from various parts of the world.

Uniting Medical Professionals

The 7th PeMSAA Australasia conference served as a unifying platform for medical professionals, fostering connections, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Registrants, including doctors, researchers, educators and industry experts, had the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions, exchange ideas, and expand their professional networks. The conference acted as a catalyst for nurturing a strong medical community and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation.

Inspired Keynote Speakers

The event featured a line-up of distinguished keynote speakers who inspired the group through sharing their expertise and insights. Renowned medical professionals from various specialties addressed the conference, delivering thought-provoking talks on the latest advancements in medicine, emerging health care trends, and innovative research. Their presentations sparked dialogue and encouraged us to push the boundaries of medical practice.

Networking and Social Events

In addition to the enriching educational program, the conference also provided ample opportunity for networking and socializing. Participants had the chance to connect with peers, mentors, long lost batch mates and industry professional during breaks and social events. These interactions encouraged new affiliations, mentorship, old memories with new meanings and lifelong friendships within the medical community.

Celebrating Generosity

Moreover, the conference became an opportunity to show our generosity, as \$600 was raised to support Mother PeMSAA student projects. This fund will have a lasting impact on the educational endeavours of medical students at the Medical Faculty, Peradeniya.

In conclusion, the 7th PeMSAA Australasia conference was a resounding success, showcasing the resilience, dedication, generosity and collaborative spirit of an overseas medical community. Let us remember the connections made, the knowledge shared, dedication to our Alma Mata and the commitment to advancing medical practice, as we look forward to future conferences and the positive impact they will bring.

Dr. Saubagya Gunatilake

Vice President

PeMSAA Australasia (2018 – 2022)

PeMSAA – UK

Sinhala & Tamil New Year Celebrations 2023, Birmingham, UK - 22nd April 2023



The PeMSAA-UK organized a successful event to celebrate the Sinhala and Tamil New year, on 22nd April 2023. This was attended by alumni from all over the country, as well as from overseas. Participants enjoyed many traditional indoor and outdoor games, as well as several creative events. The excellent music program that was enjoyed by all present. The organizing committee worked tirelessly to make this event a success. The traditional Sinhala food was appreciated by all.

With the generous contributions of the committee and the attendees, the event was associated with a profit, the proceeds of which will go towards helping the alma mater

of PeMSAA-UK. The organising committee would like to thank all those who joined on that day, and who contributed towards making this a very memorable event.

Forthcoming events – PeMSAA-UK

PeMSAA-UK will be conducting its biennial International Academic Conference on the 11th of November 2023, at the University of Oxford. The conference theme for this year will be, "Holistic Approach to Diabetes Management: Emerging Paradigms."

Dr. Ashan Gunarathne,
President, PeMSAA-UK

**Peradeniya Medical School
Alumni Association - UK**

"We endeavour to foster and promote medical education and research"

PeMSAA-UK biennial
**International Academic Conference
and the
Annual Ball**
on
**11th November 2023
at University of Oxford**

The Conference theme:
"Holistic Approach to Diabetes Management: Emerging Paradigms"
Delivered by
renowned international & national experts on
the field of Diabetes & Cardiovascular diseases

Conference Keynote Lecture
Delivered by

Prof Varagunam Memorial Lecture
Delivered by

Professor Juliana CN Chan
Director - Hong Kong Institute of Diabetes and Obesity
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor Shanthi Mendis
Senior Consultant in Global Health and Specialist
Physician/Cardiologist, Former Senior Adviser WHO

11th November 2023
Conference: 8:30AM to 4:00PM
Dinner Dance: 6:30PM to Midnight
University of Oxford, Examination Schools
Oxford, OX1 4BG

@pemsaa
Pemsaa-uk

Visit www.PeMSAA.uk
for up to date academic programme & further information

A tribute to late Dr. Bandusiri Edussuriya



It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of our colleague, past president of the Kandy Society of Medicine, retired ENT surgeon of Teaching Hospital Kandy, Dr. Bandusiri Edussuriya, on the 29th of May 2023. Affectionately known as Dr. Bandu, he lived a life of service and compassion. He hailed from Kalutara and entered the Colombo Medical Faculty from Ananda College, Colombo. He passed out from the Colombo Medical College with the rare distinction of receiving the Garvin Gold Medal for Operative Surgery in 1959. He reported to Teaching Hospital Kandy after his foreign training in ENT in UK in 1972, and served till his retirement in 1989.

This eminent healer is survived by stories of his legendary surgical skills and love of teaching. He pioneered cadaveric dura mater transplants to heal perforated ear drums in the early 1980's. He was a mentor to many in the medical field. He campaigned actively for establishing a Master of Surgery (MS) examination program in ENT in Sri Lanka, which he was able to establish with the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine Sri Lanka, during his tenure as President of the College of Otolaryngologists.

He worked tirelessly to establish the Hearing Care Center at Teaching Hospital Kandy with the help of the Rotary Club of Kandy, in which he became an active member. He was an avid history buff who authored several concise versions of major history chronicles, such as the Mahawamsa and Culawamsa. He is best remembered for his sense humor, golden voice and love of tennis. In the 1970's and 1980's there was hardly a day he spent not teaching tennis or enjoying a game of tennis. A strict disciplinarian by nature, he was keen to see everything done with precision. Many were the days he would invite colleagues for a sing song and the home still echoes with his constant whistling. He will be missed sorely by his son Kapila, daughter Nimalka, daughter in law Deepthi, son in law Sivakumar and grandchildren Taveesh, Yohan and Aari.

Dr Kapila Edussuriya (son of Dr. Bandu Edussuriya)

DONATIONS TO THE PEMSAA STUDENTS' CRISIS FUND

The PeMSAA Student Crisis Fund was established to help undergraduate students at the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya, in the event of an acute personal crisis such as serious personal health problems, serious health problems of parents or guardians including sudden death or permanent disability or loss of houses due to natural disasters, and other similar situations. We welcome donations, either as one-off donations or as regular monthly sums to the fund. We sincerely hope our alumni will generously donate to this cause, remembering how difficult life could sometimes be during undergraduate years. The details of the fund are as follows.

Name of account: 'PeMSAA Student Crisis Fund', Account number: 87997354, Bank name: Bank of Ceylon Bank branch: Super Grade Branch Peradeniya, Swift code: BCEYLKLX



Memorabilia



Now available for purchase at the PeMSAA office and via online orders

<https://www.pemsaa.org.lk/more/publications-merchandise/memorabilia.html>

BECOMING A PEMSAA MEMBER

The eligibility for membership is from two main categories; past graduates of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya and academic staff members of the Faculty of Medicine. All consultants (extended staff) irrespective of their faculties, who are involved in teaching of medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya and at the teaching hospitals are welcome to join.

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

Contact PeMSAA

Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association (PeMSAA)
Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, 20400, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 772836019 Web: <https://www.pemsaa.org.lk>
E.mail: pemsaa.temp@gmail.com