

# PeMSAA Newsletter

Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association  
March 2023



Photograph by Prof. Saman Nanayakkara

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## Prevention of childhood malnutrition: an investment on lifetime health

Optimum nutrition during early childhood is detrimental not only towards achievement of normal growth and development but also to gain protection from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in adulthood.

Malnutrition which encompasses both undernutrition and overnutrition, increases the risk of NCDs throughout the life course of an individual. Within the spectrum of malnutrition, stunting and wasting lie on one extreme and overweight and obesity on the other.

Sri Lanka at present experiences a double burden of under and overnutrition more or less at a comparable prevalence. Family Health Bureau has reported a prevalence of stunting at 17% and wasting at 15%. Recent regional studies have shown that the prevalence of overweight is around 15% and that of obesity is around 6.5%. Childhood malnutrition induces a significant personal, societal and economic burden at local as well as global level. In addition, management of malnutrition and associated complications involve a large health care cost per person apart from loss of income at both individual and societal level over a lifetime, indicating the need for cost-effective preventive strategies. Hence, it is important to elucidate the aetiologies of malnutrition and its impact on later life health to identify the opportunities to prevent its occurrence both at primary and primordial levels.

The aim of this article is to draw the readers' attention towards early recognition of risk factors for malnutrition and identify strategies to prevent development of malnutrition in children.

Taking the birth of an individual as the first milestone of lifetime health, both high and low birth weights are known to be associated with later life metabolic abnormalities such as type 2 diabetes, dyslipidaemia and coronary vascular disease. Birth weight is largely dependent on the maternal preconceptual body mass index (BMI), gestational weight gain and medical conditions in the mother such as diabetes and hypertension. Recent research has shown that intrauterine exposure to abnormal metabolic milieu leads to epigenetic changes in foetal metabolic genes that induce NCDs and obesity in the offspring.

Secondly, early childhood feeding and upbringing play pivotal roles in the nutritional status and eating behaviour in the child. Exclusive breast feeding for 6 months (at least 4 months) is crucial for normal growth and development of the young infant. In fact, breast feeding is the most important milestone in the establishment of a healthy feeding behaviour. Responsive feeding with maternal awareness of hunger and satiety cues of the infant builds up during breast feeding which helps successful transition to complementary feeding. While studies have demonstrated a protective effect of breast feeding over malnutrition, breast feeding failures are still very common among Sri Lankan mothers.

Stunting and wasting or at least transient weight faltering, that occur during the first 5 years of life are mostly attributed to improper nutrition. Lack of maternal awareness on the child's hunger and satiety cues and force feeding may lead to food refusal and disruption of eating routine. Inadequate energy density and protein content too are contributory factors. Unnecessarily prolonged breast feeding beyond 2 years of life also disrupts the eating routine. Food refusal may prompt the parent to offer junk food to the child which are of poor nutritive value that could inculcate choice of unhealthy food throughout the life.

On the other hand, overfeeding, early introduction of formula milk and consumption of sweet and salty food are risk factors for obesity. Rapid postnatal weight gain particularly during infancy and the second year of life has shown to be associated with later obesity specially in preterm infants.

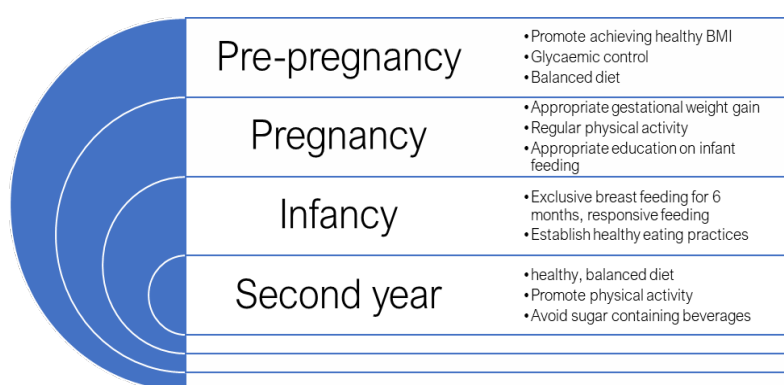


Figure 1: Strategic prevention of childhood malnutrition through interventions during the periods of developmental plasticity

Clinical trials done on preterm as well as term newborn infants have suggested that nutrient-enriched, calorie dense diet is associated with rapid post-natal growth and later development of insulin resistance and high blood pressure. As such, the current trend in early childhood nutrition has moved towards the impact on the long-term health outcomes rather than weight gain alone.

Therefore, strategies for primary prevention of child malnutrition need to focus on successful breast feeding, establishment of healthy eating behaviour, responsive feeding and avoidance of rapid weight gain in the first 2 years of life. Beyond primary prevention, current research focuses on primordial prevention through addressing the maternal health. Targeting a healthy BMI among women of child bearing age, appropriate gestational weight gain and achieving adequate postpartum weight reduction are considered as the way forward to improve intergenerational wellbeing.

Figure 1 shows some of the plausible strategies that have shown potential to modify the unfavourable growth trajectories during these critical periods of life.

**Dr. Vasana Kiridana**

Senior Lecturer, Department of Paediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya  
Consultant Paediatrician, Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya



## Achievement of PeMSAA Alumni

### Professor Tissa Wijeratne is honoured by Medal of the Order of Australia

Notable Peradeniya Medical Faculty alumni Professor Tissa Wijeratne (OAM MD PhD FRACP FRSM FAAN FAHA FRCP (Edin) FRCP (London) FEAN) is awarded by the Medal of Order of Australia (OAM) for his great service to Medicine as an eminent neurologist.

The OAM is the one of the highest way Australian recognises the service and achievement of their citizens. Professor Wijeratne is currently serving as the chair of the Department of Neurology at Western Health and professor in Neurology and clinical Associate Professor in Medicine at Western Health Clinical School (Victoria, Australia). He identified a novel and distinct syndrome "Post Covid-19 Neurological Syndrome" during the first 18 months of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Wijeratne completed a world-first PhD degree on the long-term effects of Covid-19 in brain health. He published over 350 scientific papers on Neurology which are cited more than 85,00 times by the peer scientists and clinical researchers worldwide. He published and presented over 3000 prints and radio segments as the medical journalists in national radio and television in Australia and overseas.

Prof. Wijeratne was the first Australian neurologist to be elected as a member of the International Committee with the American Academy of Neurology and was awarded the prestigious Donald M Palatucci Advocacy Leadership in 2008. For his contribution to global neurological education and leadership, he became one of the first neurologist in the world to be bestowed the Ted Munsat Award (World Federation of Neurology, 2017).

Professor Wijeratne is the first Sri Lankan-born neurologist and lead researcher neurology in Australia. Currently he serves as the visiting professor of Neurology at Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya and Rajarata University Sri Lanka. As the PeMSAA council and members, we wish him a great success in this prestigious position along the road map of improving neurological diseases worldwide.

## 16<sup>th</sup> Medical Congress of PeMSAA

Dear Alumnus,

It is with great pleasure that I would like to update you regarding the upcoming congress that has been scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 under the theme “Delivering Holistic Patient Care Amidst Challenges” which I am sure is very timely taking into consideration the current challenges faced by the country, medical practitioners and patients.

The inauguration of the congress will take place at the Grand Kandyan Hotel on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. Our Chief Guest is Professor Neelakanthi Ratnatunga who is no stranger to the PeMSAA fraternity. She is a former President of PeMSAA who has contributed much to the faculty as an outstanding academic and an alumnus. Dr. Krish T Radhakrishnan a very recent past President of PeMSAA, UK will be the Guest of Honour. The main highlight of the inauguration will be the Congress Lecture which is customarily delivered by a distinguished alumnus of Peradeniya. This year the council has bestowed this honour on Professor Kemal Deen a former Professor of Surgery at the University of Kelaniya. We would also be felicitating twenty past teachers that includes academics as well as extended teachers of the faculty during the inauguration.

The main Congress will take place at the Hotel Oak Ray Regency in Getambe, Peradeniya which is a convenient and picturesque location. The scientific committee has put together a comprehensive programme that includes plenary lectures, updates and symposia covering many specialties with the aim of updating the knowledge and giving the opportunity to many with diverse interests to attend the conference. Our eminent resource panel consisting of both local and overseas speakers I am sure will not disappoint your expectations. The Committee has also afforded the opportunity for two alumni who have contributed to advancement of science in a big way to showcase their work at the congress under the theme ‘Innovations by Alumni’. The selection panel comprising of past presidents is currently scrutinizing the applications to select the best two innovations.

I believe this is the ideal time to come back to ‘Pera’ whether you are overseas or in Sri Lanka and show your solidarity as most did not travel much during the past couple of years. To come back to the familiar environs, to smell the air that was so familiar, to meet your batch mates, teachers and others and also take a walk around your alma mater that nurtured you.

The congress committee has worked hard over the last couple of months and continue to do so with the hope of making this a real success. I am sure that many of our alumni are eagerly waiting for the registrations to open. The registrations have been priced nominally giving the opportunity for many to be there and also considering the current crisis. As you are well aware the proceeds of the conference will be utilized for student welfare -to improve infrastructure facilities and to create a better learning atmosphere. So, let me once again invite you to come back home!

PS.

As the country and faculty tries to tide over difficult times I would like to make a kind request from the alumni scattered world over. Even if you cannot be physically present you have the opportunity to help our cause. We would be grateful if you could send in your contribution by registering for the conference even if you don't attend it. The online link for registration will be shared soon. As we are planning a paper free conference you would be able to get the book of congress proceedings too. If you wish to support us further you are most welcome to donate towards student welfare. Deposits could be made to **Account No 80058629 (Medical Congress of PeMSAA) Bank of Ceylon, Super Grade Branch, Peradeniya. SWIFT – BCEYLK LX**



**Professor Heshan Jayaweera**  
Congress Chair  
16<sup>th</sup> Medical Congress of PeMSAA

# "Delivering Holistic Patient Care Amidst Challenges"



## PeMSAA

### 16<sup>th</sup> International Medical Congress

27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023, Kandy - Sri Lanka

#### Pre-Congress Work Shops

| 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2023   | 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2023  | 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2023   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Pre-Congress Workshop For Nursing Officers</b><br>Skills Lab<br>National Hospital, Kandy | <b>Pre-Congress Workshop Surgery and Obstetrics</b><br>New Auditorium<br>Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya | <b>Pre-Congress Workshop Medicine and Paediatrics</b><br>Skills Lab<br>National Hospital, Kandy |

#### Inauguration Ceremony

(By invitation only)

27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 - The Grand Kandyan Hotel - Kandy

#### Congress Lecture

"Three Decades of Battling Rectal Cancer- The Good, the Bad and the Ugly"  
 Professor Kemal Deen

#### Scientific Sessions - 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023 - Oak Ray Regency - Getambe, Kandy

|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| 8.00 am  | Registration   |   |
| 8.30 am  | <b>Plenary Lecture 1</b><br>Delivering Person-Centered Care<br>Dr. Krish Radhakrishnan (UK)  | 9.15 am <b>Plenary Lecture 2</b><br>Securing Health in Sri Lanka's Economic Recovery<br>Dr. Alaka Singh (WHO)   |
| 9.55 am  | Tea  |   |
| 10.30    | <b>Symposium 1 Medicine</b><br>Management of Status Epilepticus: an Update<br>Prof. Udaya Seneviratne (Aus)<br>The Future of Chronic Kidney Disease: an Update of New Evidence<br>Dr. Nalaka Hearth (SL)<br>Golden Hour of our Patients: Case-based Discussion<br>Dr. Ganaka Senaratne (SL)      | <b>Symposium 2 Surgery</b><br>Broad Overview of Gallstones and Management of Asymptomatic Gallstones<br>Prof. Aloka Pathirana (SL)<br>CBD Stones<br>Prof. Arinda Dharmapala (SL)<br>Acute and Chronic Cholecystitis<br>Prof. Rohan Siriwardena (SL)   |
| 12.05 pm | <b>Update - Dermatology</b><br>Dermatology Tips for a Rational General Practice in the Current Context<br>Dr. Surammika Eriyagama (SL)   | <b>Update - Radiology</b><br>Day-to-day Radiology Practice Amidst Challenges<br>Dr. Jeevani Uduphille (SL)  |
| 12.35 pm | Lunch  |   |
| 1.30 pm  | <b>Symposium 3 Paediatrics</b><br>Endocrine Disorders in Adolescence<br>Dr. Navoda Atapattu (SL)<br>Clinical Approach to a Child with Encephalitis<br>Dr. Saraji Wijesekera (SL)<br>If You Love Your Heart, Don't Flog It: A primer on rational use of inotropes<br>Dr. Manjula Hewageegana (SL) | <b>Symposium 4 Obstetrics/ Gynaecology</b><br>Reducing Sri Lanka's Maternal Mortality Rate: New Strategies are Needed<br>Prof. Hemantha Senanayake (SL)<br>Artificial Intelligence in Health Care<br>Mr. Ashfaq Kahn (UK)<br>Unexplained Subfertility: The Controversial Matter in Managing Subfertile Couples<br>Dr. Champika Gihan (SL) |
| 3.00 pm  | <b>Innovations by Alumni</b>   |   |
| 3.30 pm  | <b>Plenary Lecture 3</b><br>A Longer Queue to Psychiatrists? Impact of Economic Crisis on Mental Health in Sri Lanka<br>Prof. Pabasari Ginige (SL)   |   |
| 4.10 pm  | Closing Remarks  |   |
| 4.15 pm  | Evening Tea  |   |



| Registration Fee |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| Consultants      | Rs. 3000.00 |
| Medical Officers | Rs. 1500.00 |
| Overseas Alumni  | USD 10      |

**Registration now open**

[www.pemsaa.org.lk](http://www.pemsaa.org.lk) | [pemsaa.temp@gmail.com](mailto:pemsaa.temp@gmail.com)

## A Tribute to late Dr. Maithree Rajapaksa



This eulogy for Dr. Maithree Rajapakse, a past President of the PeMSAA, who passed away on 09.02.2023 is intended to place on record his exemplary and inspiring services to the Teaching Hospital Kandy, Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Dental Sciences of the University of Peradeniya, and to our Association-PeMSAA during his illustrious career in the field of health-care in Sri Lanka.

In sketching his professional career and his links with PeMSAA, I should begin by highlighting his joining the Teaching Hospital Kandy as a Consultant Anaesthetist in 1991 and serving there for eleven years, providing services in Anaesthesia, Critical care, Pain Medicine and Emergency Medicine. Over two years of his tenure in Kandy, he was the only Consultant in Anaesthesia in the hospital. It was him who started the Surgical Intensive Care Unit in that hospital. In the course of performing the related services Dr. Rajapaksa was also involved in initiating the Emergency Treatment Unit there. From 2000 until his retirement from the Ministry of Health in 2002 he served as the Director of the hospital. He served in the post of Vice-President of Paraplegic Association of Sri Lanka, carrying out many projects for the welfare of paraplegic patients. His being elected President of the College of Anaesthesiologists in 1994-95 epitomises the recognition by his peers of his eminence in his professional specialty and, more generally, his benevolence towards those with whom he associated.

Soon after his retirement from government service, he joined the staff of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Peradeniya as a Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology and, having worked in that post until 2007, he opted to join the Faculty of Dental Sciences, providing his expertise as a Visiting Lecturer and a Visiting Consultant Anaesthetist at the Dental Teaching Hospital in Peradeniya until 2009.

He was the president of PeMSAA from 1994-1996 and carried out many projects especially for improving the facilities for medical undergraduates at Peradeniya Medical faculty. He became the president of Kandy Society of Medicine in 2002. PeMSAA and entire medical fraternity in Kandy and Peradeniya are ever grateful to Dr. Maithree Rajapakse for his excellent services as a dedicated clinician, enthusiastic teacher, a researcher, a medical administrator and a great human par excellence. May he attain Supreme Bliss of Nibbana.

### **Professor Saman Nanayakkara**

Head/Department of Anaesthesiology & Critical care  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya

## Donation of lunch boxes by Prof. W.A.T.A. Jayalath

The long queue at the Faculty canteen during the lunch break has been an uncomfortable experience to students for many years. Prof. W.A.T.A. Jayalath donated 100 lunch boxes so that premade packs with a set menu could be dispensed quickly, thus reducing the congestion.



# PeMSAA 2022/23 Highlights

- Career guidance Programme
- Seniors Sharing Experiences
- Donation of Tabs from PeMSAA-UK
- Soft skills development lecture series
- Donation of library books by PeMSAA-UK
- Completing house for Ms. Nayana Jayawardana
- Opening of Sarasavi Uyana School Library
- Repairing the fence behind the Pre-clinical block
- Christmas carols and Dinner at Elder's Home, Mahaiyawa
- Donation of an audio player to the students
- Donation of lunch boxes to the students

**Career Guidance Programme 2022**  
Organized by **Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association**  
for Batch 2014-15  
20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 | 9 am - 12.15 pm | Via Zoom

| Time                | Topic   | Speaker                     |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 9:30 - 10:00 am     | Life's 70 questions - Being an entrepreneur   | Prof. C.K. Amarasinghe      |
| 10:00 - 10:30 am    | Life & the Physics of World - Physics in medicine   | Dr. Suresh Jayasinghe       |
| 10:30 - 11:00 am    | Developing a PhD thesis - Clinical specialties  | Dr. Balakrishna Balakrishna |
| 11:00 - 11:30 am    | Life as a General Practitioner - From work to life  | Dr. Jayasinghe Jayasinghe   |
| 11:30 - 12:00 pm    | Developing a PhD thesis - Laboratory and Research fields  | Dr. Anura Kumarpillay       |
| 12:00 - 12:15 pm    | Q&A   | Panel                       |
| 11:00 - 11:30 am    | Play along and sing the national anthem, play along to music and what can help you... Dr. Gunawardana | Dr. Anura Kumarpillay       |
| 11:30 - 12:00 pm    | Playing guitar and singing in the club  | Dr. Anura Kumarpillay       |
| 12:00 - 12:15 pm    | Be green's world - Ecology and climate change and their impact on a doctor                            | Dr. Sunil Mahipala          |
| 12:00 pm - 12:15 pm | Open discussion   | Open discussion             |

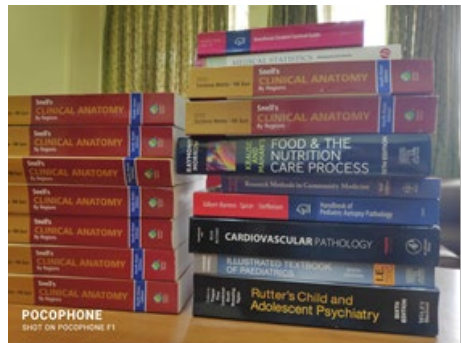
Goal Motivation Guidance **Successful Career**



**PeMSAA**  
"Sumi giving a helping hand"  
**SENIORS SHARING EXPERIENCES - 2022**  
The high flyers of the Final MBBS examination will share their thoughts and experiences

- > Should past examination results put you down?
- > How to manage time effectively between lectures, ward classes and self-learning?
- > What are the different revision methods?
- > How to organize the study leave period?
- > What to do on the day of the examination?

Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2022  
5 pm - 6:30 pm



**Personal Financial Management and Online Freelancing Opportunities**  
Workshop for Medical Students and Young Doctors organized by **PeMSAA**

"Online Freelancing Opportunities"  
How to find a good personal work and the best generation options

**Mr. Disha Abeygunawardena**  
Serial freelance, YouTuber, YouTuber and digital content creator

"Workshop Series for Personal Financial Planning"  
How to build a stream of independent and wealth

**Ms. Gangi Fernando**  
Senior Lecturer, Department of Pharmacy, University of Colombo

Working 4:30 pm - 6:30 pm  
Peradeniya, Sri Lanka



# Donations to PeMSAA Students Crisis Fund

The PeMSAA Student Crisis Fund was established to help Peradeniya medical students during an acute personal crisis such as serious personal health problems, serious health problems of parents or guardians including sudden death or permanent disability and loss of houses due to natural disaster etc. 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: BCEYLKX



**PeMSAA**  
Peradeniya Medical School  
Alumni Association



## 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, Peradeniya and academic staff members of the Faculty of Medicine. All the 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.

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

### Contact PeMSAA

Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association (PeMSAA)  
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