

PERADENIYA MEDICAL SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION *Newsletter*



SEPTEMBER 2023



Araliya Uyana at the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya – a recent PeMSAA effort to support students

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Recent PeMSAA organized events: Launching the Araliya Uyana

PeMSAA has constantly supported the University administration to create a pleasant physical environment in the faculty that would facilitate better learning for the students. Several past committees have pioneered many projects in this regard. The newest addition to the faculty landscape is the "Araliya Uyana" – a leisure area for students situated adjacent to the East lecture theatre.



This project was envisioned by the PeMSAA committee 2020-2022, and became a reality due to the unwavering commitment of many individuals, who were ably supported financially by many well-wishers. The barren area left of the East lecture theater has now been landscaped and fitted with benches.



It is further adorned with many Araliya trees which will bloom in different colours in the future. Some of the trees were also fitted with lights to give more glamour to the area, especially at night. Furthermore, a number of Araliya trees were also planted along the road leading to the clinical departments from the Peradeniya Hospital.

Recent PeMSAA organized events: Launching the Araliya Uyana



This new leisure area was ceremonially opened by the Vice Chancellor, Professor M.D. Lamawansa and the Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Professor Vasanthi Pinto, during a simple ceremony held on the 25th of August 2023. The event was attended by members of the academic staff, members of the extended staff, the non-academic staff and students.

The opening was followed by a musical interlude by the students during their lunch break.



PeMSAA would like to express its gratitude to Professor Kapila Gunawardena who spearheaded the project, all well-wishers and all others who played an active role in making this a reality. Let me very warmly invite all alumni scattered locally and across the globe to revisit your alma mater, to rekindle fond memories and enjoy its beauty.

Before you raise your glass.....

What is alcohol?

All alcoholic beverages contain ethanol (the chemical name), in various concentrations. How it affects the body varies depending on the person concerned (the person's gender, genetic make-up, co-morbidities and medications being taken), the amount of ethanol one takes, and the occasion at which one takes alcohol.

Ethanol is digested by various enzymes in the digestive system. Due to certain variations of these enzymes seen in Asians, the latter experience more detrimental effects of alcohol compared to Westerners (Chang, Hsiao et al. 2017). Certain people can 'tolerate' alcohol in high amounts and boast that they 'can drink a lot but hardly lose control'; these people are at more risk of alcohol induced health related problems than those who get 'drunk' with small amounts of alcohol.

How does alcohol act on the brain?

Alcohol acts as a GABA receptor agonist which explains its short-lasting calming effects. It also stimulates the reward system, which explains its short-lasting pleasurable effects. The 'reward system' of the brain can get stimulated by varying activities/substances/situations/events, including alcohol; and when stimulated, it leads to the release of dopamine (Vadakedath and Kandi 2022). When dopamine is released in the 'reward system', it gives us pleasure, which is essential for us to feel healthy, connected and happy. Since we all like to experience pleasure repeatedly, we tend to repeat the same activity/ take a particular substance again to experience pleasure.

In our day-to-day life, activities such as spending time with loved ones, having sex, eating a tasty food increase dopamine in the reward system. Alcohol (and all the other substances which can lead to addiction) also releases dopamine in the reward system and gives pleasure, so people tend to use it repeatedly, despite deleterious consequences.



Before you raise your glass.....

This experience of the 'pleasure effect' depends a lot on the surrounding environment one takes alcohol as well - for example one can 'experience' 'pleasure' when alcohol is taken at a party. The same person might weep while taking alcohol at a funeral house. Alcohol releases more dopamine (within a short period) compared to other pleasure-giving day-to-day activities described earlier.

Therefore, when the person continues to take alcohol, he or she may experience 'more pleasure' with alcohol and feel comparatively less pleasure in other day-to-day life activities. This phenomenon is called 'alcohol hijacking the reward system', and the person gradually starts to withdraw from 'normal pleasurable activities'.

This neglect of other pleasures often leads to negative consequences; disruption of family, job and health related aspects. At this point the person may have developed features of dependence (addiction), which is a serious mental illness. At this stage the person starts to experience withdrawal symptoms (sleeplessness, tremors of hands, nausea, body aches) when he/she does not take alcohol. So, to relieve these unpleasant symptoms the person continues to take alcohol. When the person is dependent on alcohol, it is very unlikely that he/she would recover unless proper medical care is provided.

The human brain continues to develop until one becomes about 24 years of age. Therefore, the consequences of taking any substance of abuse like alcohol before this age can have detrimental effects on the developing brain (such as being more prone to develop mental illnesses or impairments of memory).

Alcohol slows all our brain functions. Even 'low risk drinking' can affect an individual's alertness/attention, reaction time, memory and decision-making abilities.

'Low risk drinking (LRD)'

The amount of alcohol one can take without any risk is zero. The concept of LRD is being intensely debated in the field of medicine. The 'limit of low-risk drinking' has been coming down over the past decades and the most recent limit is less than 100g of alcohol per week for both sexes, and 16 grams for males and one unit/ 8 grams of pure ethanol for females per day at most.

How can we measure the amount of alcohol in alcoholic beverages?

Each and every type of liquor shows the concentration of pure ethanol (the chemical in liquor) in it - for example: v/v 40%. This sign indicates the concentration of alcohol in alcoholic beverages (e.g.: this contains 40 ml of pure ethanol per 100 ml of liquid). Ten millilitres (ml) of pure ethanol is equivalent to 8 grams (g) of pure ethanol or one standard unit of alcohol.

Before you raise your glass.....

Therefore if a person wishes to drink while minimizing risks to himself/herself, he/she could take 50 ml of this liquor per day. However he/she should not take alcohol even in these quantities if he/she intends to drive, operate machinery, swim, is ill, is pregnant or is below the age of 21 years (below 24 should be the ideal as the brain continues to develop up to about 24 years of age). If one takes alcohol even in these quantities under these circumstances it is not 'LRD'.

Alcohol increases the risk of accidents, heart diseases, cancers, liver damage, infection and mental illnesses for the user. It also increases the risk of accidents to others (for example, drinking and driving leading to road traffic accidents), mental illness among family members and violence. Alcohol, and not heroin or cocaine, is rated as the most harmful substance when harms to the user and the society are considered in combination (Nutt, King et al. 2010).

Heavy alcohol consumption is not due to one's "bad morals". It is amenable to treatment. Treatment could be talking therapy or medication, or both in combination.

P.S. As a medical practitioner, what should we do when we see a patient with alcohol related problems/ risky drinking?

Clinical suspicion is very important. If we see anyone presenting with an altered level of consciousness/ recurrent injuries/ multiple body aches and pains, as a medical practitioner we should be alert to the possibility of alcohol abuse. When responding, it is very important to be non-judgmental in our approach. We always should ask the patient what he/she wants regarding his/her alcohol taking behaviour: whether the person wishes to become abstinent or to reduce risks associated with drinking. The management should target the patient's preference. This approach will improve the doctor-patient relationship and will help to achieve the best outcome for the patient.

If a patient presents with altered level of consciousness, administering parental thiamine 300mg before giving dextrose to is very important to minimize brain damage due to thiamine deficiency, associated with alcohol abuse.

As medical practitioners we are ideally placed to detect alcohol use disorders in patients, and to provide direction and guidance to support change.



'Dewasmika Ariyasinghe.
Faculty of Medicine,
Department of Psychiatry,
University of Peradeniya
Honourary Specialist in Psychiatry,
Teaching Hospital Peradeniya
95/96 batch

The PeMSAA Bursary Scheme - 21/22 batch



The bursary scheme initiated by the PeMSAA was first commenced in 2020 to support students who were not eligible to receive any other financial grants offered through the University, but needed some additional financial support.

The bursaries offered through PeMSAA supports students with a monthly stipend given over sixty months. The initial monthly amount was rupees three thousand, and with the escalation of expenses the amount has now been increased to rupees five thousand per month. The bursaries are facilitated through well-wishers – mostly our own alumni who have agreed to sponsor one or more students for five years.

The students need to send in applications for the bursary and are selected by the Faculty Scholarship Committee, thus maintaining transparency. Those who accede to the terms and conditions of the bursary make an agreement with the PeMSAA to receive benefits for five years, but also to repay back the total amount they have received over a period of 3 years once they commence their internship, so that the money remitted back will help PeMSAA to facilitate more future bursaries.

PeMSAA has facilitated 46 bursaries for the 18/19 batch, 21 bursaries for the 19/20 batch and 14 bursaries for the 20/21 batch so far. It is with great happiness that we inform you that with the generous support of our membership we were able to facilitate 15 new bursaries for the 21/22 batch. Thus now the number of PeMSAA bursaries is nearly 100 in total.

Recent awardees signed their documents and received their bursaries at a simple ceremony held in the Faculty Board room. This occasion was attended by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya and several members for the PeMSAA council.

The PeMSAA Bursary Scheme - 21/22 batch

We have also had meetings with all bursary holders to ensure that the beneficiaries are progressing smoothly in their academic work. The PeMSAA President and Secretary will meet the students periodically to monitor their progress thus ensuring that the assistance is put to good use.

Dear Alumnus, if you wish to contribute to a bursary, please don't hesitate to **send us an email on: pemsaa.temp@gmail.com** and we will be happy to collaborate with you thus supporting the blooming buds of our alma mater. You could also link up with other well-wishers who may be willing to support a budding medical professional.

News from overseas PeMSAA Chapters: PeMSAA – UK

The current President of the PeMSAA UK recently hiked up Mount Kilimanjaro, in Tanzania, with the aim of raising funds for medical education and research in Sri Lankan universities. Mount Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain in Africa.

He plans to use the funds for worthy causes, including helping medical students in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya.



It was challenging and a gruelling experience ! 5895m, highest free standing mountain in the world . But glad I did it 😊 , Many thanks for all who supported me to raise funds to improve medical education & research in Sri Lanka

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ashan-gunarathne?utm_term=mPddDvnPx

News from overseas PeMSAA Chapters:

PeMSAA – UK

Upcoming Events



Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association - UK
"We Endeavour to Foster and Promote Medical Education and Research"

PeMSAA-UK

Annual Ball

On 11th November 2023 at
 Examination Schools, University of Oxford, 75-81 The High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG

Live Music by "Roots"



Prof. Varagunam Memorial Lecture
 Delivered by



Prof. Shanthi Mendiratta
 Senior Consultant in Global Health and Speciality Physician/Cardiologist, Former Senior Advisor

DRESS CODE	CONTACT
Gentlemen : Black Tie Ladies : Formal	Ashan : 07713 09 Lal : 07914 88 Gayathri : 07901 32

PAYMENT DETAILS
 Name: PEMSAA-UK | Ac No: 60275476 | Sort Code: 20-45-45 | Reference: Your name

11th November 2023

- Welcome Reception/Drinks 5:30PM
- Dinner Dance: 6:30PM to Midnight

University of Oxford, Examination Schools, Oxford, OX1 4BG

@pemsaaau Pemsaa-uk

Please scan the QR code to register & reserve your place




Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association - UK
"We Endeavour to Foster and Promote Medical Education and Research"

2023 International Academic Conference

"Holistic Approach to Diabetes Management: Emerging Paradigms"

On 11th November 2023 at
 Oxford University Examination Halls, 75-81 The High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG

Registration
 Welcome & Introduction Dr Krish Radhakrishnan
 President's Address Dr Ashan Gunarathne
 Keynote Lecture



Prof. Juliana Chan
 Professor of Medicine and Therapeutics and Director, Hong Kong Diabetes and Obesity, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Tea / Coffee
 Panel 1 Moderator - Prof. Ram Swaminathan

Diabetes in Primary Care	Early onset Type 2 Diabetes - Inevitable Risk
Dr Amik Aneja GP Partner, Trainer & Diabetes Lead Old Harlow Health Centre, Essex	Dr Dulmini Kariyawasam Consultant at Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
Nutrition, Exercise & Prevention	Diabetic Kidney disease - clinical challenges & opportunities
Ms Pav Kalsi RD Specialist Diabetes Dietitian & Public Health Digital Health and Long-term Conditions, London	Dr Janaka Karaliedde Clinical Reader in Diabetes & Cardiovascular Disease King's College London, Consultant at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital

Q&A
 Lunch
 Panel 2 Moderator - Dr Krish T Radhakrishnan

Diagnosis, treatment & digital ophthalmology - Scotland	Diabetes & Heart
Prof Roshini Sanders Consultant Ophthalmologist, Queen Margaret Hospital University Of Edinburgh	Dr Ashan Gunarathne Consultant Cardiologist & Honorary Assistant Professor at University Hospital Nottingham Hospital Trust
Management Of Diabetic Foot Disease (Vascular Perspective)	
Mr Shanka Benaragama Consultant Vascular & Endovascular Surgeon, Royal Free Hospital, London & Honorary Associate Professor, GCL Medical School	14.15 - 14.45 - Q&A 14.45 - 15.45 - Trainee Doctors Research presentations 15.45 - 15.55 - Round up & vote of thanks - Dr Gayathri 16.00 Hours - Tea/ Coffee & Close

Applied to Federation of the Royal College of Physicians, UK for 5 CPD credits
Tickets £40.00 per person
 Please visit www.PEMSAA.UK for updates & booking

11th November 2023

- Conference: 8:30AM to 4.00PM
- Dinner Dance: 6:30PM to Midnight

University of Oxford, Examination Schools, Oxford, OX1 4BG

@pemsaaau Pemsaa-uk

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: BCEYLK LX.

Men's Tie

Rs. 2000

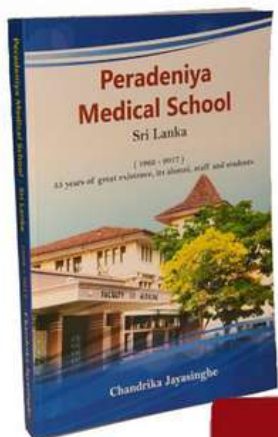
Size : Standard

Colour : Maroon,
with the logo in
yellow



50th Anniversary
Commemorative
Volume

Rs. 2000



Rs. 2000



Coffee Mug

Rs. 400