

# SLMA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2019, VOLUME 12, ISSUE 08



## SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress  
"Facing the challenges and forging ahead for better outcomes"



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## SLMA Theme 2019

Facing the challenges  
and forging ahead for  
better health outcomes

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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# President's Message

## **132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress (IMC)**

It is with much satisfaction and fulfillment that I write this message for this August newsletter after the successful completion of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress. The comments received from the local and foreign participants have been both complimentary and encouraging.

The programme put forward for the IMC was very comprehensive and stimulating. It catered to the needs of all categories of doctors – relevant to the practicing doctors of today and the eager researchers alike. The congress provided the ideal platform where all categories of doctors – consultants, PG trainees, family physicians, house officers and medical students, came together to listen, to discuss, to question, exchange views, learn from each other, showcase research done and establish links for future research.

There were six pre-congress seminars, commencing with wound care (Dr Yasas Abeywickrama), communication skills (Prof Mudiyanse), public and patient involvement and engagement (Dr Kaushalya Jayaweera), introduction to medical research (Prof Pathmeswaran), evidence based medicine for busy clinicians (Prof Kumara Mendis), lung disease and a simplified approach to the early diagnosis and treatment of anterior mediastinal masses (Dr Aflah Sadikeen).

There were two post congress sessions. A masterclass on multiorgan retrieval and transplantation (Dr Sajith Edirisinghe and Dr Niroshan Seneviratne) held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July and introduction to evidence based medicine and cochrane reviews (Prof Pisake Lumbiganon) held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August. The total number of participants for the pre congress and post congress sessions was 630.

The main congress included four orations; the SLMA oration delivered by Prof Asiri Abeygunawardene, the SC Paul oration delivered by Dr Lallindra Gooneratne, Dr S Ramachandran oration delivered by Dr Kosala Weerakoon and the N D W Lionel oration delivered by Dr

Nirmala Sirisena. The keynote address was delivered by the guest of honour, Prof Malik Peiris, on 'One Health: the way forward'. The main congress also included 12 plenaries, 23 symposia, and 5 seminars. Some of the interesting topics covered by the symposia were sepsis, new technology in medicine (nanotechnology), new diagnostics, new therapies in cancer (genetherapy) measuring human capital development, etc. The number of registrants for the main congress totaled 410.

This year we broke new ground by organizing a public colloquium on a sensitive topic 'Unplanned pregnancies'. This was held with the participation of dignitaries representing all religions of Sri

***This year we broke new ground by organizing a public colloquium on a sensitive topic 'Unplanned pregnancies'. This was held with the participations of dignitaries representing all religions of Sri Lanka, ministers, members of parliament, lawyers, members of civil societies and media.***

Lanka, ministers, members of parliament, lawyers, members of civil societies and media. This was sponsored by the UNFPA. The Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians, Sri Lanka College of Community Physicians and the Sri Lanka Medical Association were the co-organizers. This colloquium received much publicity both in the print and electronic media and we hope to continue the dialogue in the future to ensure that all pregnancies in Sri Lanka will be planned and desired.

An important and much needed seminar on 'CPD: the way forward' was held during the main congress with the participation of Sri Lanka Colleges of Surgeons, Physicians, Obstetricians, Paediatricians, Anesthesiologists, Radiologists and GMOA and the SLMA. This was conducted by Dr Sunil Seneviratne Epa, the SLMA coordinator for CME, who officially handed over the reins to Dr Panduka Karunanayake. About 3 hours of discussion followed and

a decision was made to create a common framework by the SLMA to deliver CPD to all the doctors through the respective colleges.

The topic for the SLMA debate this year was 'The Death Penalty Should Be Imposed for Drug Trafficking'. The doctors with their oratorical skills turned out to be better debaters than the lawyers with Dr Kushlani Jayathileke leading the winning team.

The galaxy of resource persons both from Sri Lanka and overseas (UK, America, Australia, Japan and Canada) fulfilled their tasks beyond expectation. I thank them all for their presence and interaction in judging oral and poster presentations that would have inspired our younger researchers.

I express my sincere thanks to the congress chairman, Dr Panduka Karunanayake, the mastermind behind the entire programme for his great commitment, dedication and enthusiasm; to Dr Kapila Jayaratne, for all the negotiations with the international funding, organizational support and arranging the public colloquium. Dr Yalinie Rajapoopathy, SLMA coordinator deserves our heartfelt gratitude for the excellent conference work done, proving herself to be a tremendous asset to the SLMA. Dr Amaya Ellawala and Dr Thathya de Silva, deserve special thanks for all the hard work with the conference souvenir and the abstract books. The editors of the CMJ and all reviewers are also thanked for the hard work in selecting oral and poster presentations.

After six months of preparation for the annual medical congress, I am extremely happy and relieved that we were able to successfully complete the International Medical Congress despite the adverse travel advisories following the April bombings and economic consequences that temporarily overcame our nation.

***'All's well - that ends well'***

Dr Anula Wijesundere  
President, SLMA



## Pre-congress Workshop - Introduction to Medical Research: From Proposal to Paper

**Prof. A. Pathmeswaran**  
Professor, Department of Community Medicine,  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya.

This workshop was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the ClinMARC Auditorium, National Hospital of Sri Lanka. There were over 25 participants and Dr Anula Wijesundere, President SLMA

welcomed them to the workshop. Though the participants were from various clinical specialties and at different stages of their career, all of them were keen on learning about the practical aspects of the research process. The workshop covered various aspects of medical research from identifying a research problem to preparing a manuscript and dealing with

journal editors and reviewers. Developing a protocol, study designs, sampling and presenting the results were some of the areas that were discussed at length. The interactive workshop was made lively by the active involvement of most of the participants.

## Pre-congress Workshop: Evidence Based Medicine for Busy Clinicians

**Prof. Kumara Mendis**  
Professor, Department of Family Medicine,  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya

**T**he Evidence-based Medicine (EBM) Team conducted a pre-congress workshop at the 132<sup>nd</sup> SLMA International Medical Conference on 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2019. The team led by Prof. Kumara Mendis, Professor of Family Medicine, University of Kelaniya comprised of five members of the College of General Practitioners, Drs Kapila Jaynath, Marylou Dharmakan, Sankha Randenikumara, Kalpanie Jayawardena and Supun Withana.

The workshop was well attended with 21 registered participants including general practitioners and specialists in internal medicine, neurology and family medicine.

A similar session was conducted by the EBM team for the 6<sup>th</sup> intake of MCGP

trainees. The team hopes to continue these "EBM sessions for busy clinicians" in different forums in the future. Reading

material for the session will be available to all at <https://kmendis.org/ebm-for-busy-gps-mcgp-2019/>



## Inauguration Ceremony and SLMA Oration

**Dr Anula Wijesundere**  
**President, SLMA**

The inauguration ceremony of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress and the SLMA Oration 2019 was held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at the Grand Ballroom, Galadari Hotel, Colombo. The Chief Guest at the occasion was Dr Rajitha Senaratne, Honourable Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, while Professor Malik Peiris, Chair Professor of Virology, School of Public Health, The University of Hong Kong and Dr Shantanu Sen, President of the Indian Medical Association were the Guests of Honour. The much revered SLMA oration 2019 was delivered by Professor Asiri Abeygunawardene, Professor of Paediatrics, University of Peradeniya titled "Strategies to reduce the use of cytotoxic therapy in childhood nephrotic syndrome". After a scintillating performance by 'The Classics' trio with Dr Munasinghe as soprano vocalist, a grand reception followed.

The welcome address delivered by the President of the SLMA, Dr Anula Wijesundere, is given below.

Our chief guest, the Honourable Minister of Health, Indigenous Medicine and Nutrition, Dr Rajitha Senaratne, our guests of honour this evening, President of the Indian Medical Association Dr Shantanu Sen, the Professor and Chair in Virology, University of Hong Kong Professor Malik Peiris, the SLMA Orator Professor Asiri Abeygunawardene, the Secretary of Health Mrs Wasantha Perera, the Director General of Health Services Dr Anil Jasinghe, our invited overseas guests, guest speakers from Sri Lanka, past presidents, members of the council of the Sri Lanka Medical Association and distinguished guests.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen!

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the 132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress. The Sri Lanka Medical Association is the oldest of all national medical associations in Asia and Australasia. The SLMA is also the apex professional and scientific organization for all categories of medical doctors in Sri



Lanka. This places a unique responsibility on the SLMA to serve as the academic, professional, moral and ethical guardian of the entire medical profession of Sri Lanka.

The Annual International Medical Congress is the most awaited event in the calendar each year. This year the theme for the congress is "Facing the challenges and forging ahead for better health outcomes". In my Presidential Induction address I delivered in January 2019, I highlighted the challenges we face. These are namely, reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases, smoking and tobacco, dangerous drugs, suicides, dengue fever, road traffic crashes, AIDS, keeping Sri Lanka malaria-free, coping with the rising geriatric population and chronic kidney disease of agricultural communities.

I am happy that we have established a new expert committee to reduce the burden of suicides in Sri Lanka. The activities of this committee are now gathering momentum and we will have a packed programme of events to coincide with the suicide prevention week planned for September 2019.

A task force was formed in February 2019 to reduce maternal mortality from dengue fever and I am extremely happy that this task has been completed. This document will be handed over to the Honourable Minister of Health at the Inauguration Ceremony later today. It is also my intention to activate the expert committee on prevention of road

traffic crashes and provide inputs to the professionals already involved in reducing the burden of chronic kidney diseases in agricultural communities in the Rajarata. Excellent headway has already been established in the other challenges I have mentioned.

I am happy that the International Medical Congress covers most of these challenging topics. Six pre-congress seminars have already been conducted. The main congress includes the keynote address, 12 plenaries, 23 symposia, 5 seminars, public colloquium on unplanned pregnancies and the SLMA debate on imposing the death penalty for drug traffickers. The congress has in addition symposia devoted to food safety, sexuality and health, tropical medicine, new technologies, new diagnostics, challenges of multi morbidity and human capital development. The congress will be followed by two post congress seminars on multiorgan retrieval and transplantation and introduction to evidence-based medicine and Cochrane Reviews.

I warmly welcome our chief guest, guests of honour, and guest speakers both from Sri Lanka and abroad and thank them for sharing their experience, knowledge, skills and break-through ideas in research. This will certainly improve the scientific and clinical aspects of the practice of medicine in Sri Lanka. I sincerely appreciate the presence of overseas guest speakers despite the adverse travel advisories in the aftermath of the unfortunate Easter Sunday disaster.

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## Inauguration Ceremony...

An event of this magnitude cannot be organized without the support and sponsorship of many individuals and organisations.

The SLMA greatly appreciates the financial contribution from the Ministry of Health, the main sponsor and strategic partner of this event. The support extended by the National Science Foundation, Anti Malaria Campaign and the pharmaceutical industry is greatly appreciated and acknowledged, especially during this period of economic difficulties.

I thank all the authors of the oral and poster presentations for their commitment to scientific research, mindful of ethical aspects and methodology. I also thank the editors of the Ceylon Medical Journal,

Professor Pathmeswaran and Professor Senaka Rajapaksha, reviewers and judges for their patience and commitment to scientific advancement.

Ladies and Gentleman, I wish to emphasize the dedication, commitment and the sterling qualities of the Conference Chairman, Dr Panduka Karunanayake, who is the mastermind behind this entire medical congress. Dr Yalinie Rajapopothy, the conference secretary for coordinating all the activities efficiently and our hardworking secretary Dr Kapila Jayaratne.

Special thanks are due to Dr Amaya Ellawala, the Editor in Chief of our newsletter for all the work associated with the conference souvenir. Dr Sarath Gamini de Silva and Dr BJC Perera are acknowledged for performing all the proof reading.

I acknowledge the SLMA office staff Mr DS Perera, Nirmala, Nadeera, Jayarani, Vihanga, Samararatne, Justin

and Raja for performing the additional work of the congress done so willingly. I wish to thank the past presidents Dr Lucian Jayasuriya, Professor Vajira Dissanayake, Dr Malik Fernando and Dr BJC Perera for the advice and guidance received at all times.

The highlight of the social programme is the Doctors' Concert, very ably and solely organised by the ever popular and genial Dr Christo Fernando. I promise you ladies and gentlemen of a wonderful evening on Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, I wish all the delegates and participants an intellectually stimulating conference. May the local doctors have the opportunity to discuss the latest research and clinical practice and form links with our overseas guests to broaden your research and clinical practice. May our foreign guests also have the time to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of our country and possibly visit the ancient historic cities. May you take back home wonderful memories of an outstanding conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.





## Inauguration Ceremony...



## Development of National Guidelines for clinical management of dengue infection in pregnancy

**Dr. Hasitha Tissera**  
Consultant Epidemiologist and Coordinator,  
Guideline Development and Editorial  
Committee

The formation of a stakeholder Expert Committee on Dengue was an initiative which came up after the Presidential Address of Dr. Anula Wijesundere, who stressed that more than 10% maternal deaths were due to dengue infection.

The Expert Committee first met in March 2019, and within a short period of 4 months was able to finalize the Guidelines for Clinical Management of Dengue Infection in Pregnancy with the collaboration of SLMA, Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, Ceylon College of Physicians, and the Central Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health. Representatives from the Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians, College

of Anaesthesiologists & Intensivists of Sri Lanka and other relevant specialties were invited as expert members.

The final document was officially launched at the inauguration ceremony of the 132<sup>nd</sup> SLMA International Medical Congress on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, 2019 at Galadari Hotel, Colombo, by presenting the first copy to Hon. Minister of Health & Indigenous Medicine Dr. Rajitha Senarathne.





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# Annual International Medical Congress 2019 concluded successfully

Dr. Panduka Karunanayake  
Vice President, SLMA and Scientific Chair  
SLMA 132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International  
Medical Congress

(on behalf of the Scientific Committee)

**T**he 132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary International Medical Congress of the SLMA was held successfully in July this year. The main Congress was held on July 25-27 at the Galadari Hotel Colombo, while several pre-congress sessions and one post-congress session were held at various venues.

The pre-congress sessions included the Third Annual Workshop on Wound Care (in collaboration with the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka), a workshop on Public- and Patient-Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) in Health and Social Care (in collaboration with the Institute of Research and Development), a workshop on Communication Skills (organized by the SLMA Core Group on Communication Skills), a workshop on Introduction to Medical Research (conducted by Prof A. Pathmeswaran), a workshop on Evidence-Based Medicine for Busy Clinicians (conducted by Prof Kumara Mendis and the Evidence Based Medicine Team), and seminars on Lung Disease and Mediastinal Masses (in collaboration with the Sri Lanka College of Pulmonologists). The post-congress session was the Surgical Anatomy and Operative Surgery Hands-on Skills Course on Organ Transplantation (in collaboration with the Organ Transplant Unit of the Sri Jayewardenepura General Hospital and the Department of Anatomy of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura).



The main Congress was organized into two daily strands, each strand represented by plenaries and multi-disciplinary symposia. The six strands were Health and Disease in the Tropics, Preparing for the Future, Chronic/Non-Communicable Diseases, Cancer, Reproductive Health, and Behaviour & Medicine. Altogether there were 9 plenaries, 22 symposia, 6 special seminars, 2 masterclasses and 4 orations. The keynote address on OneHealth was delivered by Prof Malik Peiris. This year's SLMA Debate was on the death penalty for drug-trafficking. There were also a full repertoire of free paper sessions that featured 63 oral presentations and 143 poster presentations that competed for 12 awards. The main Congress concluded with the Doctors' Concert.

An important event that took place on the sidelines of the Congress was a special meeting organized by the CPD Committee of the SLMA, where the committee, invited professional colleges, doctors' organizations and experts, reviewed past experience and charted the way forward for a voluntary national-level CPD programme for all doctors.

The International Medical Congress

continued the tradition of serving as an international forum for the dissemination of up-to-date information through its plenaries and lectures, enhancement of skills through its workshops and masterclasses, presentation of the latest research findings through its free paper sessions, celebration of research achievements through its orations, advocacy on significant issues through its special seminars, and fellowship through its debate and concert. Although it was held close on the heels of the recent Easter Sunday terrorist attack, the participation of delegates and resource persons was satisfactory and the vast majority of resource persons demonstrated their solidarity by coming in spite of travel advisories.

The Scientific Committee expresses its deep gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the scientific programme of the Congress in various ways, including peer reviewers & judges, chairpersons & moderators, overseas & local resource persons that totalled over 90, free paper presenters, orators, debators, organizers & coordinators – and last but not least, the registered delegates that totalled over 400.



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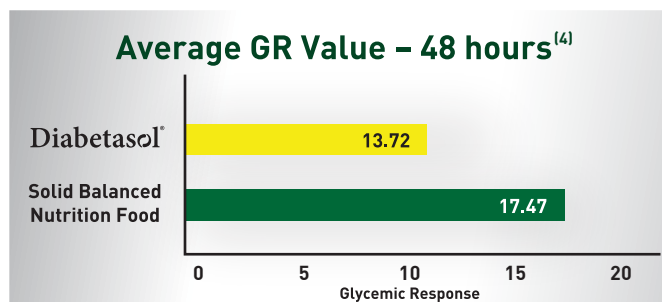
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**KALBE**



## Annual International Medical...





# The Annual Doctors Concert

**Dr. Christo Fernando**  
**Social Secretary, SLMA**

It was the considered opinion of all that the Doctors Concert this year was of exceptional quality and standard and that it stood out as a pivotal and glorious event to remember forever.

The SLMA Doctors Concert 2019 was

held on the 27<sup>th</sup> July at the Galadari Hotel Ballroom.

The event took place in front of a packed, appreciative and cosmopolitan audience. The Social Secretaries made sure all logistical arrangements were in place and presented a titillating programme of a variegated musical and dramatic

extravaganza.

The amazing talents of doctors and their family members were presented in a glittering array of many different presentations. The performers gave off their very best and the final conglomeration of the programme was labelled as the "best ever" by a discerning audience.





# The Suicide Prevention Task Force (SPTF) of the SLMA

*Useful information gathered during data collection from SLMA members*

**T**he following article on the **National Mental Health Helpline** has been identified as important for public dissemination as it will help to save the lives of vulnerable people by directing them to the most appropriate mental health service in the area in which they live.

**Please remember 1926 and give it to any patient, after assessment, whom you consider to be at high risk of suicide/self-harm due to any reason – such as avoiding life's stressors; communicating distress; punishing someone; as a way of escaping shame; to get relief from chronic pain; and as a result of severe depression.**

**Your action may be a life-saver and more importantly may help a person to change his/her life course from distress to success.**

*The Suicide Prevention Task Force of the SLMA*

## National Mental Health Helpline – 1926

*Fast becoming an essential tool in suicide prevention in Sri Lanka*

Dr. Pushpa Ranasinghe  
Consultant Psychiatrist, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is Sri Lanka's largest institute for mental health and receives nearly 8,000 admissions and 50,000 OPD/clinic encounters each year. This is in addition to the many community-based initiatives such as community clinics and a mobile ambulance service.

The Day Treatment Centre handles an average of 1,500 inquiries per year via its telephone line, while the Gender Based Violence Prevention Unit also handles 1,500 cases per year.



The first team trained to handle the helpline 1926

However, this does not represent the true burden of mental illness among the population as evidenced by the fact that there are over 3,000 suicides in Sri Lanka and over 35,000 inquiries on mental health related issues from the public through the telephone, email and social media to various sections of the NIMH alone per year, as well as numerous calls received by our telephone operators.

With the increased exposure given to the NIMH via the Media Unit, website and social media, we found that there is a need to streamline the response to public inquiries.

Our internal discussions led us to conclude that the easiest way to make a public inquiry portal is the establishment of a public hotline with a short code. This would allow an easy-to-remember method for the public to connect with mental health services.

A special mention of the Gender Based Violence Prevention Unit is warranted. Under the guidance of its Director, Dr. Kapila Wickramanayake, we trained the first team of 40 nursing officers on how to handle inquiries related to gender-based violence under 'Domestic Violence Prevention' in September 2017.

After much back-and-forth discussions and the submission of a proposal, the Director General of Health Services, Dr. Anil Jasinghe, gave official approval to initiate this project.

The creation of a national helpline is not an easy task. It required us to liaise with various services such as Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) – to provide the equipment for a call centre, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka – to get approval for a government short code and all mobile and landline operators.



Hon. Minister Dr. Rajitha Senararatne officially launches the helpline by making the 1<sup>st</sup> call to 1926

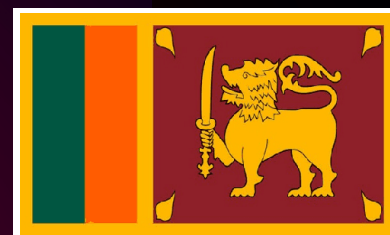
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## The Suicide Prevention...

We are very appreciative of the support extended by the Chairman of SLT, Mr. Kumarasinghe Sirisena, who provided all the call centre equipment and rental free of charge, citing a national requirement.

During the World Mental Health Day celebration in October 2018, our hard work paid off and the National Mental Health Helpline 1926 was launched in a fully-equipped room adjoining the Gender Based Violence Prevention Unit.

The impact of the helpline can be measured by the number and type of calls received. While initially there were some callers unsure of how to use this service, over the ensuing months under the guidance of our trained staff, the helpline became an important support for many members of the public who required mental health support or knew someone who did.

So far, we have received over 5,800 calls from various parts of Sri Lanka. The unique feature and main advantage of calling 1926 over other support lines are its close integration with regional mental health support services. We can directly link our callers to our network of Psychiatric Clinics, Psychiatric Social Workers and Community Psychiatric Nurses through which/whom they can get help in their own localities.

The types of cases are varied, from the regular to the challenging. We receive many calls requesting information on mental health services to which the team has printed information sourced from

the NIMH and Psychiatry Units of Line Ministry and regional hospitals. However, most calls are directly regarding mental health concerns a person may have about himself/herself or a loved one to which our nurses and doctors are trained to provide counselling and advice.

As can be seen in the 'Type of Calls' chart, the helpline covers a wide spectrum of mental health inquiries. The most challenging cases such as a caller attempting suicide are handled by a senior member of the 1926 team such as a Diplomate in Psychiatry, Senior Registrar in Psychiatry or a Consultant Psychiatrist.

All calls are recorded and a call report of each call is written for quality assurance and auditing purposes.

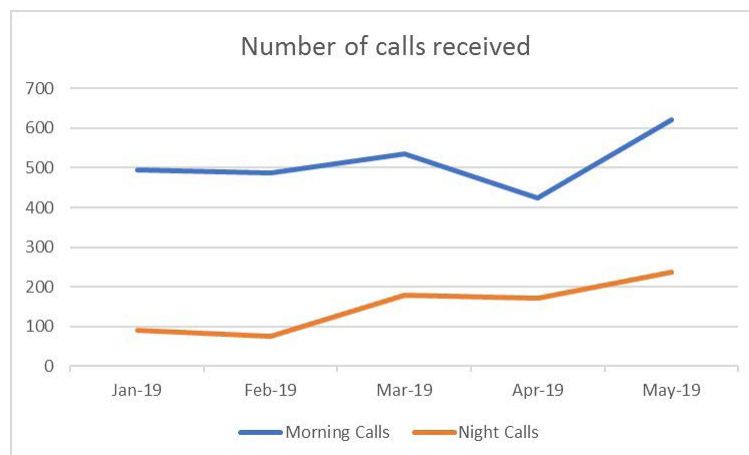
The system donated by SLT has a gamut of features including being able to call back after a missed call, listening in on an operator's conversation, taking over a call in an escalating situation and reporting on operator performance.

The national mental health helpline was an invaluable resource in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks, with more than 1,250 inquiries being handled during this period. The follow-up of psychosocial services continues for the victims to date.

The helpline makes a compelling case as an essential tool for mental health services in Sri Lanka. The future looks bright now with over 120 staff being trained in managing the 1926 service. While we do lose some staff due to transfers, we see this as a positive feature in spreading the message to other regions to further benefit the public.

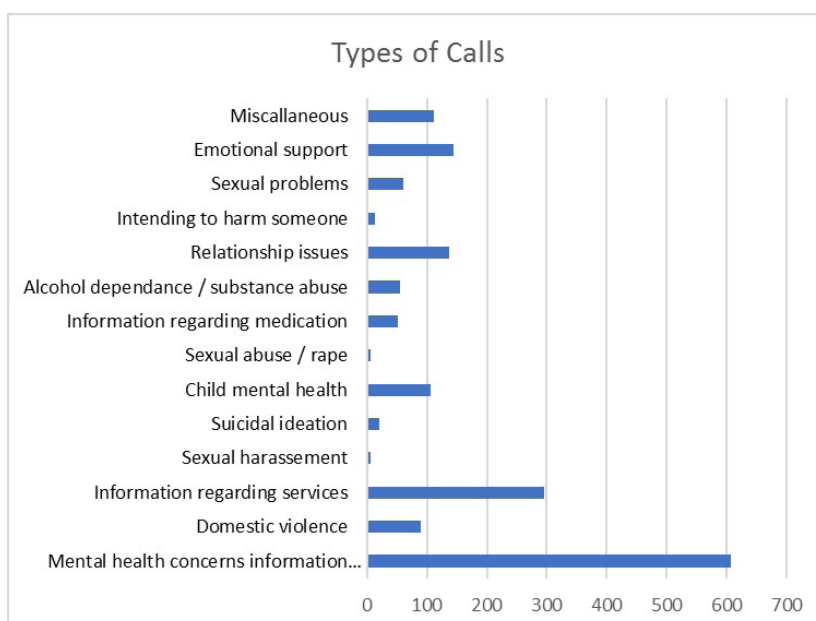
More innovation is in the pipeline, as we plan to start a mental health chat service for the younger generation who are constantly on their smartphones.

We feel that the NIMH is now better equipped to deal with public inquiries linked to the day-to-day issues of mental health.



### 1926 National Mental Health Helpline

- This is a 24/7 toll-free helpline
- 120 trained professionals
- Helps people build up self-esteem
- Provides a connection to care during times of distress
- Gives support in emergencies such as a risk of suicide
- Provides comprehensive and coordinated responses in the short and long term
- Extensive psycho-social network around the country connecting people with local caregivers





# Public Colloquium on Unplanned Pregnancies

**Dr. Kapila Jayaratne**  
Honorary Secretary, SLMA

In Sri Lanka, about 360,000 women become pregnant every year. One out of three of these pregnancies are estimated to be unplanned pregnancies. When a pregnancy is unplanned or unintended, it can be detrimental to the woman and her family, including the expected child and other children, as well as to the health system and the society at large.

Efficient family planning is the medical recommendation to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Family planning saves lives. However, myths and misconceptions exist regarding the different methods including contraception, and the medical objective of family planning is often misinterpreted. This is why it is of utmost importance that policymakers are privy to the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding family planning services.

In the recent past, Sri Lanka witnessed communal violence triggered by myths and misconceptions around alleged family planning activities. This indicates a lack of knowledge among individuals on the critical role that family planning plays in the prevention of unintended pregnancies, reducing maternal deaths and in achieving universal health coverage.

Considering the priority the subject deserves and the recent challenges faced by the program, the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) facilitated a dialogue with religious leaders, parliamentarians, healthcare professionals, legislators,



civil society, and the media, to provide a platform for open discussion and to dispel myths and misconceptions around family planning at the International Medical Congress of the SLMA. Invited resource persons included; Rev. Medagoda Abhyatissa thero, Hindu priest Rev. Shanker Swami, Moulavi Sheik Kaleel, Rev. Claud Nonis, Hon. Minister Harsha De Silva, Hon MP Mr. Sisira Jayakody, Hon MP Mr. Vijitha Herath, Presidents counsel Mr. Ali Sabri, Consultant Community Physician Dr. Janaki Vidanapathirana, Prof. Indralal De Silva and Dr. Sagari Kiriwandeniya.

Dr. Anula Wijesundere, President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association in her opening address noted, "There are many misconceptions around family planning. It must be understood that it is not about population control. Family planning is about empowering women and giving them the choice to take control of their own sexual and reproductive health. Family planning enables women to complete their education and pursue careers, thereby contributing towards a progressive and sustainably developed Sri Lanka".

Dr. Kapila Jayaratne, Secretary of SLMA and Consultant Community Physician,

setting the stage for the colloquium, said; "Each year, about 360,000 women become pregnant. One out of three pregnancies is an unplanned pregnancy that might cause mental stress and high costs for the mothers and the families".

Speaking at the session, Ms. Madusha Dissanayake, Assistant Representative of UNFPA Sri Lanka highlighted; "Every woman has the basic human right to decide whether, when and with whom to have children. Family planning saves lives. It can prevent unwanted pregnancies and avert unsafe abortions. Most young people in Sri Lanka are sexually active and they should not be prevented from accessing sexual and reproductive health services due to the stigma. We have to ensure every young person in Sri Lanka has the knowledge required to make safe and informed choices about their bodies".

Dr. Sanjeeva Godakanda, National Program Manager for Family Planning, described the medical scientific rationale of family planning.

Prof. Hemantha Senanayake moderated the colloquium.

This colloquium resulted in a number of publications in both electronic, print and web-based media.





# SLMA Cricket Team – Champions of Professionals Cricket League, 2019

Dr Anula Wijesundere,  
President, SLMA

At the finals of the above tournament held on Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> of August, the SLMA cricket team beat the lawyers in the T20 over tournament by 7 wickets with 2 overs to spare. The lawyers scored 135 for 8 wickets in 20 overs. The victorious SLMA cricket team reached the target in 18 overs with the loss of 3 wickets only.

The SLMA cricket team was captained by Dr Thilina Samarasinghe. Dr Isuru Ayesh received the best batsman's award in the finals.



## National Honours for SLMA President and Past President

The current President of the SLMA, Dr. Anula Wijesundere and Past President, Prof. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake were proud recipients of National Honours awarded by His Excellency the Executive President of Sri Lanka on 19 August 2019 during the National Honours Ceremony held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), bringing immense pride and recognition to the SLMA.

Dr Anula Wijesundere received the 'Sri Lanka Sikhamani Award', which is conferred for distinguished service to the nation of a general nature. She was bestowed this honour for her contributions as President of the Society for the Upliftment and Conservation of Cultural, Economic and Social Standards (SUCCESS) Colombo for the past 25 years. SUCCESS has contributed immensely to the promotion of medical, economic, cultural and educational standards of the people. Dr. Wijesundere has provided leadership to the society's activities including the conduct of over 1000 free medical clinics, provision of income generating material to needy people to elevate their economic status, activities to foster Buddha Sasana in the North-East and assistance to the Sri Lanka Army by provision of ambulances and medical, surgical and rehabilitation equipment.

Professor Vajira H. W. Dissanayake was awarded the national titular honour of 'Vidya Jyothi'. The National Honour of Vidya Jyothi is the highest national honour that is awarded for outstanding scientific and technological achievement. Prof. Dissanayake was nominated to receive the national honour by the Sri Lanka Medical Association in 2016 considering his exceptional contribution toward the development of education, research and services in Genetics and Genomic Medicine, Biomedical and Health Informatics, and Bioethics in Sri Lanka over two decades and for his pioneering work in these fields.





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# The Sri Lanka Medical Library: 175 years of unparalleled service to the nation

**Dr. Panduka Karunanayake**  
(on behalf of the SLML Management  
Committee)

The Sri Lanka Medical Library (SLML) has touched and benefitted all our lives without exception, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly. But like all such truly momentous institutions, she is a quiet, unassuming giant – so it is our duty to tell her unmatched story on her behalf, especially this year, when she completes 175 years of uninterrupted and unparalleled service to our nation.

To see how much she has touched our lives and fully appreciate her value, we need to go back to the beginnings of modern medicine and medical learning in our country.

The British established control over the maritime districts of Ceylon in 1796 and the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815. While the indigenous population continued to make use of their own traditional forms of healing for some time, the medical needs of the colonial masters and the local elite were initially looked after by British-qualified doctors who were employed by its military. These army surgeons started modern medical education in our country, when they conducted classes for local students informally, in the military hospitals. The students who reached proficiency went on to become medical assistants in these hospitals. From the late-1830s onwards, the government began sending a few local (Dutch and Ceylonese) English-educated men from elite families to either St Andrews in Edinburgh or Bengal Medical College in Calcutta for their medical degrees and postgraduate training. After returning, these doctors manned the colonial medical service.

By 1844, the doctors who had thus returned from the UK and India, having realized the need to continue the pursuit of knowledge in their field, set up the Colonial Medical Library – the fore-runner to the Sri Lanka Medical Library, which is now the oldest existing medical library in Asia. It is, in effect, the first attempt in our country to promote what we would today

call continuing medical education (CME) and continuing professional development (CPD).

It came into existence even before the first modern medical school in Ceylon (the medical school in Manipay, Jaffna, established in 1848 by Dr S.F. Green, an American missionary doctor), the Colombo Medical School (established in 1870, the fore-runner to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Colombo, the oldest existing medical school in the country), and the Ceylon Branch of the British Medical Association (established in 1887, the fore-runner to the Sri Lanka Medical Association, the oldest existing medical professional organization in both Asian and Australian continents). All these institutions pre-dated not only all our universities and ministries, but even our Parliament.

It is this collectivity of nineteenth-century institutions that enabled and strengthened the expanding colonial medical service as it extended its beneficent reach beyond the elite to the general population in both curative and public health sectors, by providing the indispensable intellectual, academic and professional foundations for it. This was the beginning of the countless subsequent success stories in healthcare in our country over almost two centuries.

It is this story that helps us understand the real historical significance of the SLML in the annals of our country's journey into modern medicine. The SLML is not merely a collection of books and journals, although it is certainly also that. It is not only a repository of knowledge and experience for medical professionals who wish to pursue the latest knowhow in their field in order to expand their capabilities and serve their patients better, although it is certainly also that. It is also the germinating centre of the entire modern medical endeavour in our country – the home of the original pioneers who met there, pursued their CME, received their CPD, germinated the ideas for an expanding modern healthcare service, imagined its standards that later reached international reputation, and served as the epicentre

for all achievements that followed, including its medical schools, professional organizations and postgraduate forays. It is a social institution that has pre-dated and nurtured all the institutions that have nurtured us, like a timeless, towering rock that has watched a civilisation rise forth beneath it. It is the labour room of all of modern medicine in Sri Lanka.

Underlying this special status of the Library amongst these pioneering institutions are several interesting facts. One of the Library's two founders in 1844, Dr James Loos, was also the first principal of the Colombo Medical School in 1870. By a happy coincidence, the two institutions share the same birthday 26 years apart: June 1<sup>st</sup>. The Library shifted its premises from its first location in Maradana to the new buildings of the School in 1879 – doubtless contributing significantly to the education imparted by the School. And when the Ceylon Branch of the British Medical Association was established in 1887, it was situated here within the Library premises. As a token of gratitude for this support, when Dr E.M. Wijerama bequeathed his home – the Wijerama House – to the Association (then renamed Ceylon Medical Association) in 1962, he decreed that the Library be permanently allowed free space within the House, a practice that has continued until now.

Today, the field of medicine has changed immensely, as has the very nature of libraries all over the world. We learn differently, seek knowledge differently and use that knowledge differently. Libraries too must change and become different. These are challenges that the SLML needs to meet today, to keep serving the nation.

To move with these changing times and to continue to serve our profession and our people, the Sri Lanka Medical Library needs new faces, new vigour, new enthusiasm, newer technology and new ideas – not only with regard to knowledge and logistics, but also with regard to how she finances herself.

Contd. on page 22



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## The Sri Lanka...

The Management Committee of the SLML welcomes all doctors, living both in Sri Lanka and abroad, to come forward to make use of its great resources – which include not only priceless collections but also the latest books and journals to help with postgraduate exams and professional career. While reaping its services and benefitting from it like the generations before us, we must also help the Library in these changing and challenging times.

The Management Committee has set up a special anniversary fund that would give the Library the financial stability to continue in these times of economic turmoil, and seeks the goodwill and donations of all professional organizations, including professional colleges,

associations and societies, as well as all well-wishers and philanthropists, here and abroad.

To encourage more doctors to become life-members, there is currently a life membership drive with a concessionary rate (Rs. 4,000 during the month of September 2019). The next Annual General Meeting of the Library will be held on Thursday, September 19, 2019 at 11.30 am at the Library premises.

Come join us! Be a part of the history that has laid the foundations of the medical successes of our nation.

For further information, please visit us at Wijerama House, 6 Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7 (Tuesday to Saturday); call 0112695188; email us at [slmedical.library@gmail.com](mailto:slmedical.library@gmail.com);

visit our website at [slmlibrary.wordpress.com](http://slmlibrary.wordpress.com); or visit our Facebook account Sri Lanka Medical Library.

### Acknowledgements:

I gratefully acknowledge the following sources for valuable information for this article:

A History of Medicine in Sri Lanka – From the Earliest Times to 1948 by Chris Urugoda (Colombo: Sri Lanka Medical Association, 1987).

“The story of the Colombo Medical School” by Carlo Fonseka, in The Colombo Medical School Centenary, 1870-1970 (Colombo: Faculty of Medicine, University of Ceylon, 1970).



## SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE FAIRMED RESEARCH GRANT

The SLMA hereby calls for applications for the Fairmed Research Grant.

Applicants should be life members of the SLMA, if eligible for membership. If not currently a member, please obtain SLMA membership prior to submission of the application.

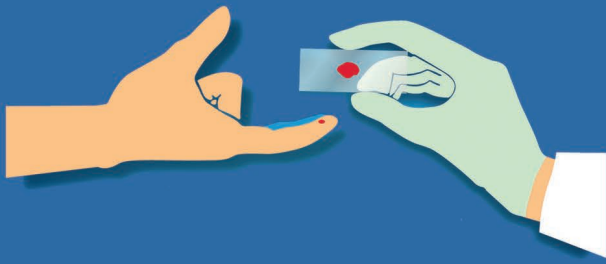
The Fairmed Research Grant is offered for a research project with relevance to the advancement of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Sri Lanka. The maximum financial value of the grant is LKR 350,000.00.

### Important

1. All research projects should be completed within two years.
2. Preference will be given to proposals that could be completed with the available grant. Utilization of grant funds should commence within six months.
3. Proposals should include problem identification, detailed methodology, timeline, and itemized budget.
4. Funding requests for conference registration and travel is discouraged.
5. Ethics clearance should have been applied for when submitting the grant application.
6. The grants will be formally awarded at the SLMA Foundation Sessions in October/November 2019.
7. The application forms are available at the SLMA office and on the SLMA website.

**The deadline for applications: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019**





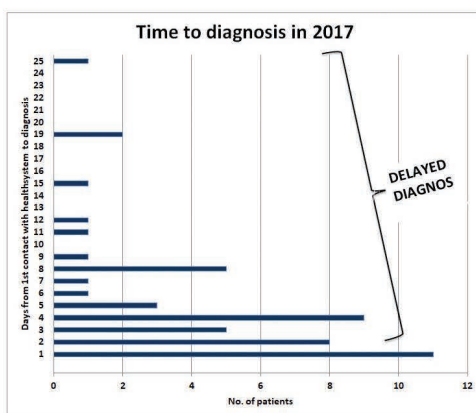
# Reduce the Delay in diagnosing imported **Malaria**

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Therefore **malaria should be diagnosed within 24 hours of onset of fever**



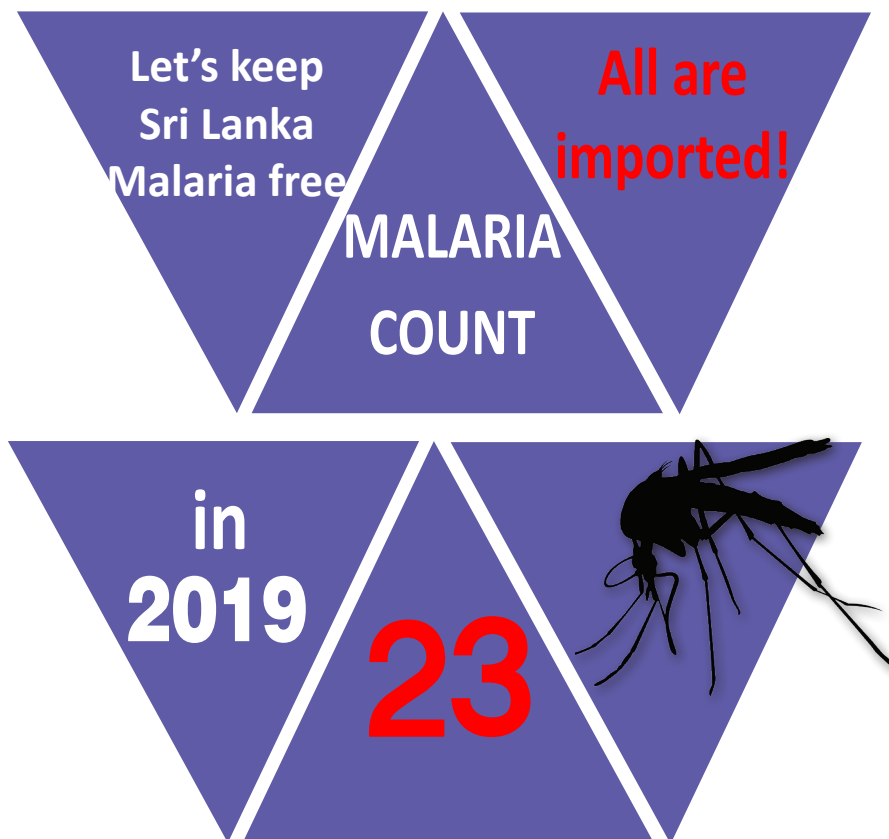
## Your role:

For all fever patients, always check **travel history** at first interview. If patient has travelled to a malaria endemic country recently, **test for malaria**.

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