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SLMDA UK
Founded in 1982

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From the President

Since the establishment of the SLMDA by a group of dedicated Sri Lankans, supporting medical and dental students through student bursaries and library book donations has been the core business of the organisation. However, as the socio-economic conditions in Sri Lanka improve and the number of faculties increases, it has become necessary to explore alternative and perhaps more creative ways by which the SLMDA could employ its limited resources for supporting students and medical and dental education in Sri Lanka. The longevity of the SLMDA or any other professional organisation is linked to its ability to attract and retain the second generation of professionals to their fold. The interest and enthusiasm of this new generation cannot be captured through any residual loyalty they may feel for the country of their parents' origin. The activities of the SLMDA must therefore be seen as relevant and significant to their own professional development and the needs of Sri Lanka in the 21st century, if the new generation is to truly engage with the organisation. It is only then that their interests in the organisation will extend beyond merely attending the annual dinner and dance or an occasional cricket match. With this in mind, the SLMDA has recently diversified its activities supported by appropriate constitutional amendments that legitimise such an extended mandate. Annual pump priming research grants, involvement with natural or man-made disasters and emergencies and sharing professional expertise with our sister (or brother!) organisations, are some examples of this extended range of activities. The current Council is committed to maintain this momentum.

The SLMDA has always been a vibrant and an inclusive organisation and in many ways is a microcosm of what Sri Lanka could be at its best. The journey so far may have been challenging at times but the fact that the organisation has survived many of these challenges is a clear tribute to the excellent leadership it has had from its very inception, first by our founder members and then by a long succession of our past presidents. It is indeed humbling to follow these visionaries who have led the organisation through all its trials, tribulations and periods of change. We will continue in their spirit accepting the inevitability of change and embracing the future evolution of the organisation with open arms.

In this journey, commitment, fairness and inclusiveness will be our guiding principles as they have been from the very inception of the Association.

Mahesh Nirmalan

Professor Mahesh Nirmalan MD, FRCA, PhD, FFICM
Director of Clinical Placements (Commissioning & Quality Management)
Academic Lead (Phases 2 & 3: Years 3, 4 & 5), Manchester Medical School
Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine
Manchester Royal Infirmary
University of Manchester & Central Manchester Foundation Trust



The Council 2015 - 2016

President: Prof. Mahesh Nirmalan

Secretary: Dr. Ruwan De Soysa

Immediate Past President: Prof. Allistair Solomon

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Mr. Ajantha Jayatunga

Dr. Rasioka Jayatunga

Dr. Andrew Nayagam

Prof. DYD Samarawickrama

Dr. Champa Sumanasuriya

Dr. Thushara Rodrigo

Advisory Committee

Dr. Sathi Ariyanayagam

Dr. Sunanda Jayaratne

Dr. Cyril Pattapola

Spring Scientific Meeting, Annual General Meeting and Dinner Dance

This was a very successful event held on 02 May 2015 in Manchester with several eminent speakers contributing to the Scientific Meeting. The programme included the following presentations: *Global trends in Maternal Health*: Dr. Dilip Wijeratne; *HIV - Where are we today?*: Dr. K Ranjababu; *CKD and Mental Health in Sri Lanka*: Dr. Asanga Fernando; *Pharmaceutical Industry and Global Health*: Professor J Hettiarachchi; *The Impending Destruction of the NHS*: Professor Raymond Tallis and *Fast - tracking Anti-malarial Drug Discovery Through Repositioning* : Dr. Niroshini Nirmalan.

A significant feature of the event was the enthusiastic participation by many young doctors. The new Council elected during the Annual General Meeting is listed above. The day ended with the customary Dinner Dance.



Enrol a New Member

Please invite your friends and colleagues to join the SLMDA.

SLMDA Website

Please visit the SLMDA website

www.srilankan-mda.org.uk

Please inform others.

Law Medical Cricket Match 2015

Ajantha Jayatunga

Eager anticipation was one of the descriptions of the mood of the SLMDA team following last year's resounding win. Absence of the two star performers from last year was playing on the minds and the new skipper Anura called each player to "up your game and make a contribution".

In contrast, the Lawyers were somewhat sombre. Missing some of their regulars and short of match practice, they were feeling a bit blue even as the match commenced on a very cloudy morning on Sunday the 5th July 2015 at the glorious Philathletic Ground in Harrow. The lawyers' team had to borrow a player from the Docs to prop them up.

Youngsters to the fore

True to form, the toss was lost and the medics were "inserted" to take the first lease. Missing the regular openers, the makeshift pair of Vinodh and Ajantha opened the innings and both were soon back in the hutch. Minoth (31) and Thilina (23) made slow but steady progress. Scoring was not easy as bowling of the two Warnapala brothers was tight. Only 45 runs were scored off the first 15 overs. Thilina departed and Youvan followed soon after. There was some anxiety as Raveen soon picked up an injury.

However, he battled through it with the help of a runner and accelerated at the right time as the bowling attack tired. Minoth departed just when we needed to push on. Enter new find Shami Farook. Keeping a very calm head he provided the anchor role for Raveen (48) to go for his shots.

The lower order failed to make a huge contribution in search of quick runs. Final scramble in the last few overs mainly by Shami (42) took the medics over a par score of 200. (203 for 9 wickets)

The legal response

The legal reply stuttered as they lost a wicket early. This was followed by a period of aggressive counter attack by Manoj and Shavin helped by some wayward deliveries and the score read 80 off 13 overs. Both the batsmen flayed the medical bowlers to all parts on a pitch that was dry by the afternoon. The situation looked a little ominous and the SLMDA was staring at defeat. Suddenly the situation changed with a very lucky strike by Dhammika who removed Manoj with the first ball he bowled with a shooter (better known in Sri Lankan circles as Uruttan) and Shaveen departed the very next over to a stinging cut snapped up by skipper Anura at point.

Youvan causes havoc

Enter Youvan the wrecker. He took 3 wickets in 4 balls whizzing his stuff past the hapless lawyers. A hat trick was missed by mere fingertips. The evergreen Hemantha made a late entry and started a rearguard action with Dilshan which fell short of the required run rate. Mo Ramali helped with the demolition taking two more and



Youvan completed the job taking 5 wickets for 23. It was all over bar the shouting with Lawyers all out for 155.

Heeding the skipper's call, the team stepped up and each player responded, with the biggest contributions coming from the youngsters Youvan with the ball, Raveen, Shami and Minoth and the dependable Thilina with the bat.

The second team lets down

There was a group of eager second team players of the SLMDA who flocked from across the country, many travelling considerable distances to play a match against the lawyers. As the hour approached, it was clear that the opposition was not going to turn up. A red faced lawyers' organiser could only apologise for this terrible let down by his colleagues. A hastily arranged seven a side match ensued but it was clear that their anger and frustration was not going to be easily negated by a mere apology. They will demand answers and remedial solutions to prevent a recurrence if this game is to be restored.

Once again, credit must be given where it is due. The venue was superb and the food and music were well managed. Thank you to Wasantha Tennekoon and Auffer Asver. It was a disappointment to many that the traditional tug of war did not take place.

Conclusions

We have proved that there is ample talent amongst the SLMDA ranks to meet the legal challenge on the cricket field. It was a worry that the support shown by the lawyers to their organisers was poor. The let down by the second team of the lawyers may have long term consequences unless a plausible solution is found. Already many suggestions have been proposed.



Score Card

SLMDA 203 for 9 wickets off 40 overs

Raveen Jayasuriya 48, Shami Farook 42, Minoth Kanagaratnam 36, Thilina Ambepitiya 23.

Hemantha Warnapala 2 for 32 off 8 overs, Dr Jeevaka Samarasinghe 2 for 33 off 5 overs, Shavin 1 for 24 off 8 overs, Manoj Warnapala 1 for 33 off 8 overs

ASSL UK 155 all out in 35 overs

Manoj Warnapala 37, Hemantha Warnapala 31, Shavin 30, Dilshan 24

Youvan Illangakoon 5 wickets for 23 off 8 overs, Mohammed Ramali 2 for 18 off 8 overs, Anura Malaweera 1 for 27 off 5 overs, Dhammika Premadasa 1 for 15 off 3 overs, Akram Roman 1 for 41 off 8 overs

Result: SLMDA won by 48 Runs

Dates for Your Diary



Annual General Meeting, Spring Scientific Sessions and Spring Dinner Dance

1st May 2016 at the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Conference Centre near Heathrow, London



Autumn Charity Ball

Provisionally booked for the 1st October 2016 at the Twickenham Stadium, Twickenham, Middlesex

LATEST NEWS

SLMDA Members Visit Faculties

A team consisting of among others, President Prof. Mahesh Nirmalan, Past Presidents Drs. Veerasiri Punchihewa, Ajantha Jayatunga, Rasioka Jayatunga, Bandara Panagamuwa, Allistair Solomonz and Auffer Asver and Drs. Mahendra Gonsalkorale, Uditha Jayatunga, Ruwan de Soyza, Lalani de Soyza, Malkanthi Ratnayake, Sathi Sukumar, Melanie Weerasinghe and Roshan Perera undertook a tour of the medical and dental faculties in Sri Lanka accompanied by some of their spouses. Drs. Nihal Herath and Mahen Elangasinghe joined the team from Sri Lanka. They held meetings with the deans to explore means of further strengthening ties between the SLMDA and the respective faculties. Some members also met with the Director of the PGIM to discuss aspects of the overseas training module of the specialist trainees. In addition, they conducted a Workshop on Communication Skills for the benefit of the trainees due to embark on their overseas training. The Report of the Workshop is published on pages 9 and 10 of this Newsletter.

Founders' Day Event

The founder members, past Presidents and their spouses were hosted to a luncheon by the current Council on 6th September 2015 at the Old Fold Manor Golf Club in Barnet, North London. This was in appreciation of their Services to the SLMDA. It was a most enjoyable event which was organised by Drs. Nayagam and Punchiheva.



Not in the pictures:

Dr. Douglas de Almeida (1984),
Dr. MGA Ismeth (1987), Prof.
DYD Samarawickrama (1997),
Dr. Padma
Samarawickrama (1998), Dr.
Nihal Herath (2004), Dr. Cyril
Pattapola (2006), Dr. Sunanda
Jayaratne (2007), Dr. Auffer
Asver (2010) and Dr. Ruvini
Senasinghe (2013)



SLMDA Pump Priming Grants 2016

These are for collaborative research projects between SLMDA members and a doctor or a dentist in Sri Lanka. There are two awards, each to the value of £1000.00. On successful completion of the project, the principal investigator or his/her Sri Lankan collaborator will be eligible to apply for a travel grant to present the outcome of the project at the SLMDA Scientific Sessions in the UK or the SLMA or equivalent academic sessions in Sri Lanka. These travel grants will cover only the cost of one economy class airfare between the UK and Sri Lanka. Conditions apply.

The project proposal (maximum 2500 words), curriculum vitae of the principal investigator in the UK and that of his/her collaborator in Sri Lanka must be submitted electronically as soon as possible to:

Professor Mahesh Nirmalan MD, FRCA, PhD, FFICM

President SLMDA

E-mail: maheshnirmalan6@gmail.com

For further details, please visit the SLMDA website or contact a Council member.

Book Donation Scheme

The amount allocated currently to each faculty is £1500.00. According to the library sources, the books donated by the SLMDA are in great demand by the students. With the cost of textbooks being what they are, a vast majority of students cannot afford to buy any books. The sourcing of books for the 2015 round has been completed. It is hoped to complete the deliveries of books to the faculties by the end of 2015.

Annual Charity Ball

The 33rd Annual Charity Ball was held on Saturday 3rd October at the Lowry Hotel, Manchester. The organisers had done a sterling job to ensure that the guests had a most enjoyable time. The music by *Breeze* was a mix of the old and the new. The food was sumptuous. The cultural programme gave an opportunity to rest one's feet while enjoying youthful energy, exuberance, vibrant colours and a rhythmic beat. The raffle draw offered some useful prizes to the winners.

A "Dutch auction" of a cricket bat signed by Sri Lankan cricketing great Mr. Kumar Sangakkara raised a little over £700 for the SLMDA charities. The bat was donated by Dr. Daya Panditha Gunawardene, a founder member of the SLMDA.

It was quite noticeable that a vast majority of guests were young. Many senior members commented that this was most welcome in ensuring the long term success of the SLMDA.





Spring Concert and Musical Show in Essex

The following pictures are from the SLMDA Spring Concert and Musical Show held on 28 March 2015 in Billericay, Essex. As can be seen from the pictures, it was a most enjoyable event.



Bursary Awards

After this scheme was made more flexible, some faculties have continued to seek bursaries for their deserving students whereas other faculties have opted to receive a lump sum equivalent to the annual cost of a bursary to enhance their respective student support funds. These funds disburse smaller awards to students in financial difficulty and are therefore able to assist a greater number of students needing help.

Report of the Communication Skills Workshop organised by the SLMDA at the College of Surgeons, Sri Lanka on 4 November 2015

Ajantha Jayatunga

We had considerable reservations about how to conduct a Communication Skills Workshop as this was the first time that any of us have attended a communication skills workshop let alone conduct one. The method adopted was a "fish bowl" format where an open interview was observed critically by the others in the group. Considerable thought and preparation was given to make certain that the facilitators as well as the participants and the volunteers understood the format. We had the opportunity to learn from a mini workshop we held shortly before the start of the tour. Many of the consultants amongst us contributed to the case scenarios.

We targeted a maximum of 25 senior trainees with the intention of preparing them to come to the UK for further training. Only 5 trainees were accepted from each of the 5 clinical specialties selected. Whilst Paediatrics was oversubscribed, it was very disheartening to note that Anaesthetics failed to send a single trainee despite 5 of them registering (and thereby blocking) others from attending. Even in other specialties, only about 50% of registrants turn up. It was a shame that once the first 25 applicants were registered, others who wished to attend were turned away. We had decided that the workshop would be conducted in such a way that each participant would have an opportunity to deal with at least one scenario.

Selection of the volunteers was a difficult task. By good fortune, we were able to get help from Mrs. Sharmini Herath who had a huge influence in the appropriate circles in Colombo. As it turned out, these volunteers were ideal as they were mostly in the field of corporate communications. Several of the touring party also helped as volunteers and I also had to call on my class mates who had recently retired and some longstanding friends to make up the adequate numbers. I was rather nervous that we had inadequate numbers of volunteers to cover all the scenarios had all 25 registrants turned up. We decided that each volunteer would be asked to do two of the cases to make up. As it transpired due to poor turnout of trainees, we had more than adequate volunteers: all those who pledged support turned up on time. Sadly, attempts to recruit volunteers from the British Council failed.

The preparation and selection of the scenarios proved to be rather time consuming. Some of the SLMDA members and members of the Council who were not touring with us also helped to prepare the scenarios. Many had to be rewritten and the tasks for the volunteers explained. Once this was completed, the paperwork was completed at the College of Surgeons (COS) Colombo whose staff was extremely efficient and

helpful. Dr. and Mrs. Punchihewa worked tirelessly and with great commitment as they showed wonderful dedication in visiting the venue, arranging sponsorship, printing a wonderful folder and generally liaising with the College of Surgeons. The Director of the Board of Study in Surgery Dr. Ranjan Dias was instrumental in obtaining the venue and organising a camera crew etc. and directing the workshop from Colombo.

We also had an unexpected and late boost from another stalwart amongst our membership Prof. DYD Samarawickrama who helped us at very short notice in getting the format of the workshop revised to an acceptable standard. There were also excellent suggestions from Drs. Gonsalkorale and Roshan Perera about acting out a scenario after the initial introductions. This proved invaluable in the final reckoning. I offer a final "Thank you" to Dr. Punchihewa for initiating the idea of a Communication Skills Workshop.

The feedback

Given below is a summary of the feedback received. It clearly indicates that those who were fortunate enough to attend the Workshop benefitted enormously. Glowing remarks of appreciation were also conveyed to us verbally at the end of the event by the trainees as well as the volunteers. Furthermore, it has been conveyed to us that previous communication events conducted by professionals from the UK at various conferences and other events were below par compared to what we had achieved. The free comments that the candidates as well as the volunteers made are also included in the summary.

Congratulations to Mahesh and Rasioka for excellent lectures and our classy actors Mahendra & Roshan for a superlative role play scenario and to Punchi and Chitra for laying the groundwork for the workshop. All of these efforts helped to make the event a great success. Most of all, I appreciate the contributions by the volunteers who gave their time willingly to educate the next group of specialists in Sri Lanka.

Conclusions and Suggestions

- The communication skills workshop was an unqualified success.
- It was one of the more meaningful contributions that we have collectively made to postgraduate trainees awaiting foreign training.
- It would be very nice if we could repeat this kind of workshop on a regular basis as requested in the feedback.

- The format that we used could be repeated and copied at future events. Further improvements could be made as we gain more experience.
- Perhaps individuals in the SLMDA could replicate this format within their specialties if we develop closer ties with the respective Boards of Study.
- It could be combined with a recently returned trainee's views on do's and don'ts not dissimilar to the paediatric session that Rasieka organised during the morning.
- Finer points on social etiquette and behaviour, team working, handover, feedback, appropriate attitudes and generally behaving in a gentlemanly manner could conceivably be added to such events. Our trainees could steal a march on other non-UK personnel in the NHS workforce if we are suitably proactive. I have identified the personnel (amongst our group of volunteers) who can deliver such a module.
- The lack of discipline shown by the trainees in not attending even after registering has been fed back to the chairs of the Boards of Studies in various specialties. Hopefully, they will take action. The lesson we have learnt is that we should enforce the condition that applications must be rejected unless accompanied by the payment of the fee. Although this was stipulated on the application, it was not enforced. With the benefit of hindsight, this was a mistake.

A doctor's life is like that!

Following the AGM Dinner Dance, most of the attendees were residing at the same hotel. Unfortunately, there was a fire alarm around 5 am the following morning. Several SLMDA members and their guests were seen parading at the hotel's main entrance in various degrees of dress and undress.

There was one who was seen roaming the corridor after the all-clear was pronounced looking rather lost: he was 'looking for his room'!

There was this husband without his wife. When asked where his wife was, he answered, 'She asked me to come and get her if there was a real fire'.

