



SLMDA UK

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# NEWSLETTER

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## From the President



It is indeed a pleasure to issue this message. This has been an unprecedented year where all our plans and activities had to be shelved due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our AGM and the

Annual Scientific Sessions followed by the Spring Dance due to be held during the May Bank Holiday weekend had to be cancelled after all the preparations. As a result, for the first time in the annals of the SLMDA, the tenure of the President and the Council was extended for another year. Even now, we see no light at the end of the tunnel and are wondering whether we will be able to hold the Scientific Sessions and AGM in May 2021 as well. As of today, it seems very unlikely that it will be possible and therefore we are considering the possibility of holding both events virtually. We shall take a decision regarding this in a few months' time and let you know. You will understand that we are in no position to hold a dance in the foreseeable future. I guess that we will have to wait for an effective vaccine for our guests to feel safe enough to attend such an event.

With all our fund-raising activities in limbo, our financial situation is rather worrying. However, at the last Council meeting, we decided to continue with our annual Book Donation Programme in the coming year as it is our flagship project. Also, we will be inviting young doctors to submit their project proposals to

compete for two SLMDA research grants. The two recipients of last year have progressed with their research and have published their results. This is an area that we want to develop further to attract young doctors to the SLMDA fold as we the seniors gradually take our inevitable leave.

During this year, we were able to plan and host a very informative webinar on COVID-19 in May when people were looking for answers to many burning questions regarding the unfolding situation. I am happy that we had 70 participants and their responses were extremely encouraging. We are currently planning to hold another webinar to discuss the post-COVID world and the physical and mental health fallout of the pandemic. Also, we are planning to discuss the financial, employment and poverty issues that we may experience in the future. So please watch this space!

Once again, I thank all of you for being with us over the years and hope you will help us to rise as the proverbial Phoenix from the ashes of this pandemic. Until we are able to meet freely and enjoy the usual bonhomie that is the bed rock of all SLMDA activities, I wish you the best of health and happiness.

May all of you be well, safe, and please keep smiling come what may!

*Thushara Rodrigo*

### The Council 2019 – 2021

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Dr. Thushara Rodrigo

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Dr. Rasioka Jayatunga

Dr. Auffer Asver

Dr. Champa Sumanasuriya

## COVID Webinar

### The Highs, the Lows, and the Curve

SLMDA UK organised a webinar on COVID-19 on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to discuss important aspects of the pandemic for which the public was looking for answers at the time. There were 100 registered to participate while 70 joined on the day.

The speakers were Prof. Suranjith Seneviratne, Professor and Consultant in Clinical Immunology and Allergy, Royal Free Hospital and University College London and Department of Surgery, University of Colombo, Dr. Chamara Warnapura, Consultant in Anaesthetics and Intensive Care Medicine at Luton and Dunstable University Hospital, Dr. Roshan Perera, Consultant Psychiatrist at Neville Centre, Leicestershire Partnership Trust and Dr. Melanie Weerasuriya, General Medical Practitioner, Bromley, London.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Thushara Rodrigo, the President of the SLMDA-UK and Consultant Pathologist, Mid and South Essex NHS Trust.

Professor Seneviratne explained the nature and behaviour of COVID and the challenges of producing a vaccine. Also, he discussed the immunological background of complications seen with COVID.

Dr. Warnapura discussed the treatment protocol and management of patients with complications in an ICU setting.

Dr. Perera discussed the mental health aspects of the lock down seen in the community while Dr. Weerasuriya explained how GP practice has changed during the pandemic with minimal face to face consultations. Also, the problems of obtaining PPEs for GPs were discussed.

Finally, Dr. Rodrigo explained the pathophysiology and pathology of COVID symptoms, signs, and complications.

Following the presentations, the panellists answered questions from the participants. Unfortunately, not all questions could be answered, as by now the webinar had gone on for 2.5 hours and had to be concluded.

Considering the participant's responses, the SLMDA's COVID webinar was a success as it was at a time when the pandemic was evolving, and people had many questions to clarify. As the panellists represented the important fields of medicine that were dealing with COVID patients, they were able to deal with all aspects of the pandemic.

Finally, this was another feather on the SLMDA's cap. It also highlighted once again the relevance of the Association to day to day events.

## COVID Humour



## Book Donation Programme

The SLMDA is going ahead with the Book Donation Programme for 2020. The SLMDA informed the faculties of this in July. The book lists were received a month later and the purchase order was placed with the supplier Mediline Books in October.

The books have been ordered. Mediline Books has informed the SLMDA that there could be disruption to the supply chain due to current uncertainties in Sri Lanka and other countries.

Nevertheless, every effort is being made to deliver the books to the respective faculties before the end of this year. The significance of this Programme has increased because the Faculties have been informed that there would not be any library grant this year from the government.

At a recent SLMDA Council meeting, it was decided to continue with the Programme in 2021 even with reduced fund-raising efforts. However, the allocation for each Faculty will be lower in value.

## Sports

### COVID No Play

The eagerly awaited event in the summer is the Law Medical Cricket and Netball encounters.

This is as much a spectator participation as locking of horns by the two professional groups. The legal eagles were on the ascendency in the recent past, but the medics would always aspire to strike back.

Like all other sporting events, this event too came a cropper due the ongoing pandemic.

We hope to revive the friendly rivalry again next year subject of course to COVID status. At the time of writing, this situation remains bleak.

*Mr. Ajantha Jayatunga*

### Golf

The second sporting event which hit the dust was the annual Golfing event against the Sri Lankan Golfing Society. Even though golfing activity did not suffer as much as the other sports, social distancing issues have dictated how matches can be conducted. the *Jeeva Siriwardane Trophy* remains unpolished in the cabinet and we hope that it will come out again next year.

We also had a new event for the SLMDA golfers planned in Stourbridge. As all social golfing events were cancelled, this event did not get off the drawing board.

As this government predicts that life will return to normal next year, we have no option but to live in hope!

## COVID Poetry

### *When time stood still*

*Sunshine is beaming in bright golden rays  
As day follows night and night follows day  
Time to reflect & much time to pray  
There's hope for a new dawn, as Nature is  
breathing  
When time stood still!*

*Daffodils are dancing in many hues of yellow  
Bluebells are blowing in the far meadow  
Cherry blossoms carpeting fields fresh & new  
There's hope for happiness, as Nature is  
blossoming  
When time stood still!*

*Young lambs are bleating on fields far & near  
Fresh leaves open in deep woodlands without fear  
Birdsong echoes as freely they roam  
There's hope for tomorrow, as Nature is resting  
When time stood still!*

*The Ozone now replete with clean air flowing  
The Oceans are green & sea life recovering  
Waterfalls cascading majestic & free  
There's hope for a future, as Nature is healing  
When time stood still!*

*As Man follows & obeys the laws,  
his misery will cease, his misery will pass  
As nothing lasts forever; yes, nothing ever lasts  
There's hope for a New World, as Nature rejoices  
When time stood still!*

*- Dr. Rasieka Jayatunga*

### *Standing in the Sainsbury's queue*

*Waiting in the supermarket line  
Keeping two trolleys' distance apart  
A cross section of human beings  
From geriatrics to young teens*

*Waiting for the slightest shift  
In the line that is well ahead  
Will they buy up all the stock?  
Where will I go for my bread?*

*Waiting, some are reading  
Some are glued to their phones  
Some talking; some texting  
And others just staring.*

*Waiting, shifting from foot to foot  
Trying to keep the blood flowing  
If only there was a little music  
We could do a little jig and a trot.*

*- P Grace*



## Fund Raising

### Register with [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) today!

SLMDA has been recognized as a charity of good standing by Amazon. All SLMDA members, your family and friends could help bolster the Association's finances by making your Amazon purchases via smile amazon.

The process for donating is simple. Please choose Sri Lankan Medical & Dental Association in the UK as the chosen charity.

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## Enrol a New Member

The SLMDA is seeking help from the current members to enrol at least one new member each. Let us all work to increase the membership.

### Please contact:

Tel. +447974722745

E-mail: [slmdasecretary@gmail.com](mailto:slmdasecretary@gmail.com)

Thank you.



## Research



### A descriptive study on the clinical characteristics and aetiology of Addison's disease among Sri Lankans

Addison's disease (primary adrenal insufficiency) is a rare endocrine disorder with potentially life-threatening complications which are easily prevented by timely treatment. In Sri Lanka, similar to most regional countries, tuberculosis was thought to be the commonest cause for Addison's disease. However, with improving healthcare services and treatment of tuberculosis, it has been noticed that most patients with Addison's disease do not have tuberculosis. It is believed that autoimmunity, the commonest cause for Addison's disease in the developed world, is probably contributing to a significant proportion of these patients. Establishing the autoimmune aetiology is important as it allows screening for autoimmune co-morbidities, screening of family members and improvement in overall patient management. Furthermore, little is known about clinical characteristics and treatment requirements in Sri Lankans. Data on this regard are scarce even in the South Asian region.

Therefore, a descriptive study was designed to address these gaps in knowledge. A cohort of patients with Addison's disease, attending endocrine clinics at National Hospital of Sri Lanka was identified. An interviewer administered a structured questionnaire, and a data collection form was developed to collect demographic and clinical characteristics. Patient awareness and quality of life were also assessed

Thus far, nearly forty adult patients have been recruited and patient interviews have been conducted. Sampling for immunological studies has been done. An interim analysis was conducted in September 2020 and an abstract has been submitted to the annual conference of Sri Lanka College of Internal Medicine (SIMCON 2020). In the next phase, we wish to extend the study to include children with primary adrenal insufficiency followed up at the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children, Colombo. Immunological studies will be conducted at the end, in liaison with a reference laboratory in the UK. It will help to determine the proportion of patients who have autoimmune aetiologies.

This project will also serve as the foundation for future studies on Addison's disease.

We acknowledge the support received from the Sri Lanka Medical and Dental Association which funded this study through its Research Grant Scheme. We express our sincere gratitude for their continuous and generous support throughout the study.

**Dr. Harsha A Dissanayake MBBS MD**  
**Senior Registrar in Endocrinology**  
**National Hospital of Sri Lanka**

## Research



The projects conducted with the SLMDA UK research grant are:

1. Triple positivity for non-structural antigen 1, Immunoglobulin M and Immunoglobulin G is predictive of Severe Dengue Infection (paper published: see below).
2. Immature platelet fraction as a novel haematological marker to predict recovery of platelet count among dengue patients (manuscript under preparation).

I sincerely thank the SLMDA UK for the research grant and support for my research studies on dengue in Sri Lanka.

**Dr. Visula Abey Suriya** MBBS, MPH, MPhil, FRSPH  
Co-ordinator, Navaloka Hospital Research & Education Foundation

### Triple positivity for non-structural antigen 1, immunoglobulin M and immunoglobulin G is predictive of severe thrombocytopenia related to dengue infection

Sanjay de Mel, Basuru Uvindu Thilakawardana, Primesh de Mel, Choong Shi Hui Clarice, Malka Shalindi, Chandima de Mel, Lal Chandrasena, Christina Yip, Eng-Soo Yap, Suranjith Seneviratne & **Visula Abey Suriya**  
**Journal of Clinical Virology** **129**, August 2020, 104509; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcv.2020.104509>

#### Highlights

- Triple positivity for NS1, IgM and IgG is associated with severe dengue infection.
- Triple positivity is predictive of thrombocytopenia and complications of dengue.
- Triple positivity is a novel, globally applicable biomarker for severe dengue.

#### Abstract

##### Background

The early identification of patients at risk of severe dengue infection (DI) is critical to guide clinical management. Non-structural antigen 1 (NS-1), immunoglobulin M (IgM) and immunoglobulin G (IgG) are used routinely for the diagnosis of DI.

##### Objectives

We sought to evaluate whether positivity for NS-1, IgM and IgG individually or together is predictive of severe complications of DI.

##### Methods & materials

A prospective study was conducted among patients with DI admitted to our institution between 2014 and 2019. DI was diagnosed based on a positive NS1 or IgM. IgG was

also tested on all the patients. Clinical data was obtained from electronic medical records at NH. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 20.

##### Results

We collected data on 3504 patients. Patients who were positive for NS1, IgM and IgG (triple positive: TP) were more likely to develop severe DI (63.8 %) in comparison to those who were only NS1 positive (single positive: SP) (3.0 %) and patients with positive NS1 and IgM (double positive: DP) (7.5 %). [ $p = 0.001$ ]. Regression analysis confirmed that TP status on admission was predictive of severe complications. ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Receiver operator characteristic curve (ROC) analysis showed (AUC: 84.8; sensitivity = 90.7 and specificity = 83.2) that TP status on admission is predictive of thrombocytopenia on day 5. The predictive power of TP status was superior to that of NS1 and IgG positivity.

##### Conclusions

We propose that TP status on admission is a novel predictive factor for severe DI. Further studies are required to explore the biological basis for this finding.



### An inspiring Story

Many of you would remember Ms. Samitha Samanmali as the medical student who was paralyzed after an iron bar fell on her when she was working as a member of the organizing committee of the MEDEX Exhibition 2008 at the BMICH. SLMDA was so pleased to learn a few years later that she completed her medical education.

She did not stop after gaining her MBBS: she went on to undertake postgraduate studies and while doing so, invented a device to help disabled persons drive cars!

Recently, she was in the news again: she has won a bronze medal in Women's Para Rowing at the 2019 Asian Rowing Championships!

She is an inspiration to us all. SLMDA is proud that in her hour of need, it was able to help her in a small way.

**We wish her every success!**