

Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association -PeMSAA Australasia

PeMSAA Newsletter



March 2018
Volume 1, Issue 2

Message from Secretary PeMSAA Australasia

Welcome to the second publication of the PeMSAA Australasia newsletter.

Most of you may be aware we are only a few months away from the 6th Biennial PeMSAA congress to be held in Adelaide, South Australia. This is an exciting time for all of us with much preparation happening behind the scenes with lot of support from the members of the organizing committee as well as the interstate and New Zealand representatives. The interest so far has been unprecedented and it is heartening to see a large contingent of Alumni planning to attend, all the way from Sri Lanka and many other countries including the USA and UK. Registrations will be open soon and we invite you to complete the 'Expression of Interest' form online at: <http://www.pemsaaaustralasia.org/2018-adelaide-congress/expression-of-interest/>.

The response to the first issue of the newsletter was very positive with lots of encouragement from the alumni as well as past and present teachers from the faculty. We wish to invite PeMSAA members to contribute to the future issues of the newsletter.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity invite Peradeniya Alumni living in Australia and New Zealand to become a life member in this expanding organization by visiting the revamped website.

Wish you all the best and hoping to see you for 6th PeMSAA Australasia congress from 12 through to the 14th October 2018.

Dr Shantha Sooriyabandara
Secretary - PeMSAA Australasia
February 2018

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**6th PeMSAA Australasia
Congress - Adelaide**

12- 14th October 2018

- Pre Congress tours
- Lectures and workshops
- Gala dinner
- Musical show
- Batch Trip From Adelaide to Melbourne via Great Ocean Road



Teachers; they are Worth their Weight in Gold

Dr S. Sriskandavarman
Consultant Surgeon Queensland Australia.
Past President, PeMSAA Australasia

In side this story of
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plane ticket and
about 50 pound ster-
ling pocket money

Jaffna Medical School

October 1965

I entered the faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya in October 1965. We were asked to report to the senate on 2 October 1965 (Saturday) for Registration as a medical student. I travelled from Jaffna (>200 Km) and reached the senate building in time. There were several others, some with their parents, for the big occasion. After keeping us waiting for nearly 2 hours, we were told that the registration will not take place that day, and we have to report to the office at the medical faculty, on Monday, 4 October. One can feel the frustration among those present. My plan is to stay with my uncle, who was a senior lecturer in the Maths department. He had a university house at the end of the Galaha Road, below Sangamitha hall. I had the key to the house, as my uncle and the family were in Jaffna for the vacation, and was planning to travel by car the next day (Sunday). He asked me to come back to Jaffna after the registration, so that I can travel with him the next day. He wanted me to travel with him as he was travelling with small children and an adult hand in an emergency. Having wasted a day with un-necessary travel, I had to rush back to Kurunagala by bus to catch the Uttharadevi express train so that I can be home the same night and leave by car the next morning.

Body feed

The first day in the Anatomy dissection room and was it a bit 'scary'. Four of us (all men) shared the same 'body' with four seniors (2 men and 2 women.) There was a bit of soft questioning, ie: ragging. Scary, because of being unfamiliar with cadaver, dissection and new words like medial, lateral, superior, inferior etc. The lecturers and demonstrators were there and tried their best to explain the words, etc etc. In the rush I cut my finger with the scalpel, nothing serious. The first signature was in two weeks and we had to finish pectoral region, axilla and clavicle. The first signature was with a tough demonstrator, and getting a fair mark from him would be a big achievement, we were told by our seniors. I got caught to some ragging, but escaped the big ones as I did not stay in the halls. Completing the signature and taking the seniors for the 'body feed' which was compulsory and we had to pay the bill, officially ended the rag period. We quickly picked up speed and confidence, finishing the upper limb and the 'revise viva' in ten weeks. We also had the task of updating the seniors of what we have learned, as they were getting ready for the 2nd MB examination. It was mutually beneficial.

Students Unrest

The vacation saw the student unrest among arts students, police were called in and there were clashes. The VC closed the university and asked all the students to get out of the campus. The clinical medicos are exempted. The second term started 3 weeks late, which meant only seven instead of the 10 weeks.

Anatomy dissections & Clinicals

We had to dissect 'chest, abdomen and pelvis' the largest portion of anatomy. We had to stay till night, whole day Saturday, to finish work and the six signatures and end of the term viva. We survived.

The third term was head and neck & brain dissection. We were alone as the seniors have moved out; we are now experts in dissection. All went well.

The fourth term dissection was the lower limb, and it was a piece of cake. The junior batch arrived to keep us busy. There were only 72 in the junior batch as opposed to our 95. Our body was the last one to have juniors; the 19 behind us had none. The usual ragging, body feed etc went on and we completed the 2nd MB examination and move on to the clinical side. Full day of clinical lecturers, practical, travelling to various clinics around Kandy, Hope ship etc kept us busy and honest. Finished examination after examination, viva, clinical examination and finally we became doctors. Only 36 of the 95 who entered with us (5th batch) passed at first possible opportunity. Others finished later and all 95 became doctors.

Internship

I started my internship with the Professor of Medicine in Kandy. It is during this internship, I decided that I am going to do surgery and started reading anatomy, in preparation for the Primary FRCS examination, held every year, January in Colombo. My second internship was in Surgery in Kandy. I started during the first JVP insurgency, and the acting surgeon passed away about 3 weeks I started (MI). A week later the new surgeon was transferred to Kandy and I finished internship in October 1971. My first Job was as RMO Matale. I spent most of the time working in Bakamuna (a JVP hot spot) There was plenty of time to study and I passed the Primary FRCS examination. Soon I was transferred to GH Colombo to start my surgical training. I met SHS Matale in his office, to get my release to go to Colombo. I wondered whether he will release me, as there was no replacement. He was very pleased that at least one person has passed the examination from Matale, and he gave me the release letter without any hesitation.

Surgical Trainee

I did, one year of General surgery, nine months of Paediatric surgery (Lady Ridgeway), 9 months of Accident service. This would have been sufficient for me to sit for the Part 2 in UK. I was appointed as lecturer in Surgery in The University of Peradeniya and also got married and my wife was already a lecturer in the Pathology department in Peradeniya. I started in Peradeniya and GH Kandy in December 1975. Prof. Barr Kumarakulasinghe and Dr APR Aluvihare were my supervisors. Of the two, the Professor was also my teacher when I was a student. Drs Panagamuwa (5th batch) and Dr Maruthappu (6th batch) were the registrars at that time.

Taken abroad with only two dollars to spare

A year later, there were no scholarships made available, to clinical departments, so I decided to take the no pay option. There were severe restrictions on foreign exchange, but the Government of that time would release enough to buy a plane ticket and about 50 pound sterling pocket money, to government doctors going overseas on no pay leave. But this was denied to University doctors. I managed a ticket from other sources and left for UK with one pound sterling and one US dollar, a friend gave.

I spent about a little over 3 ½ years gaining experience in general surgery, urology, plastic and cardio thoracic surgery. I obtained the FRCS in the meantime. I returned to Peradeniya, in August 1979, and was made senior lecturer. The department had 4 senior staff, Dr C Ratnatunga has joined the department, along with Dr Karaliedde as an anaesthetist.

Jaffna Medical School & Sabbatical leave

During this time the newly formed Jaffna Medical school, advertised for a senior lecturer in surgery for which I applied, and was duly selected. I joined the Jaffna university in January 1981. This is the most difficult period in my carrier. Although 2 Professors of Surgery have been appointed and left or vacated their posts, not a single paper was found showing any planning for the surgery department. I was shown a dirty filthy ward which other surgeons have used to keep their long stay patients. It took a Herculean effort to clean, make modifications and make it fit for patients and final year medical students who were scheduled to start in about 18 months. It took nearly six months before I can start admitting patients, run clinics, and operate. While waiting, I took in second batch students for introductory surgery, clinical appointments etc. This is all done single handed. The university the advertised for the post of Professor of surgery, and there was a lot of interest, as all the initial work has been done. A total of six people applied, and I felt that except for one or two, all the others are totally unsuitable for the position. Being a part of the university, I was able to convey my feelings to the relevant people, and made sure that the most suitable person was appointed.

Everything went well and the first batch of doctors graduated from Jaffna. The political and security situation rapidly deteriorated after the 1983 riots. In 1985, I became eligible for the sabbatical leave, and made use of that to leave the country, which became permanent. Since then I have worked in Fiji (2 years) and Hong Kong (4 years) before migrating to Australia, 26 years ago.

In Australia.....

In Australia I had to sit for the part II of the surgical examination. It was not easy, but I managed after attending a four week preparation course in Sydney.

During my training years in Sri Lanka (4 years), I would consider Prof. Aluwihare as one of my mentors and well wishers. I did not know him till I joined as a lecturer in 1975. He has remained as a good friend until now. I used him as a referee when I was in England, He always wrote a very powerful report, and when it is about my experience and seniority, he will send me a copy. Not many people would do that.

Prof Ratnatunga, is another one, I considered as a mentor and a friend. My first contact with him was when I was a final year medical student and he was the registrar in the Prof unit.

While in England, preparing for the FRCS part II, Mr James Angell, consultant urological surgeon, was very supportive in my preparation for the examination (1976-77).

I was in regular contact by mail. When I went back in 1982, on a three month vacation, he was in the fore front as a referee and in finding locum jobs. He has published books and wrote articles in medical journals.

In Australia (Townsville) Dr John Avromovic, became my mentor when I was preparing for examination. He will give questions for me to answer and he will correct them with useful comments. He once said, "The first step in passing any examination is to decide to sit for the examination". There were distracters, but I don't want to write about them.

My advice to new doctors and those who want to take on surgery as a carrier, "It is a very hard, but a rewarding life. Be absolutely sure before you embark. Cling on to good and supportive supervisors and **Teachers; they are worth their weight in gold**".

Our New Website— <http://www.pemsaaaustralasia.org/>



Welcome New PeMSAA Australasia Life Members!

1. Dr Akila Samarakkody Queensland
2. Dr Dharshani Gunaratne Australian Capital Territory
3. Dr Kumara Ekanayake South Australia
4. Dr Prasana Rodrigo Victoria
5. Dr Sanath weerakody Victoria
6. Dr Chandima kandegedera Victoria
7. Dr Saumya Jayabahu Western Australia
8. Dr Priyanka Perera South Australia
9. Dr Upa Dissanayake Western Australia
10. Dr Danny Dissanayake Western Australia

Family Fun Day - Adelaide

Dear Friends,
We are delighted to invite you along with your families to join us with this fun filled afternoon;
At the Thorndon park on March 17th from 3pm onwards.

This will be a great occasion to meet each other and catch up.

Please use this opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones with colleagues and their families from our Alma Mater.



PeMSAA Australasia
Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association

Adelaide Family Fun day

17th March 2018 (Postponed from 27th January due to extreme weather)

3- 8 pm - Thorndon park



Out door games

Get together with new members

Dinner

MUSICAL



CHAIRS



PeMSAA Australasia Committee Members 2017-2018

President
Secretary
Treasurer
New Zealand

Dr Nayanananda Lekamge
Dr Shantha Sooriyabandara
Dr Janakie Ratnayake
Dr Sisira Jayathissa (Immediate past president)
Dr Lakashman Bandara

State Representatives

South Australia (2018 Congress Organising Committee)

Dr Priyan Yapa
Dr Shathi Bandara
Dr Priyanka Perera
Dr Kumara Ekanayaka
Dr Ravi Ruberu

New South Wales

Dr Malini Arumugam
Dr Anura Thalagala
Dr Nimmi Athuraliya (Editor)

Queensland

Dr Sri Varman
Dr Lakal Dissabandara
Dr Akila Samarakkody

Victoria

Dr Tissa Wijerathne
Dr Shalini Wickramasinghe
Dr Janaka Thennakoon
Dr Shiran Wijerathne

Western Australia

Dr Senarath Werapitiya
Dr Chandrasiri Premarathne

Australia Capital Territory

Dr Kalyana Rodrigo
Dr Dharshani Gunaratne

Tasmania

Dr Kapila Idirimanna
Dr Kshendra Thilakaratne

PeMSAA Australasia
Po Box 952
North Adelaide 5006 South Australia
ABN 57083249753
Website ; <http://www.pemsaaaaustralasia.org>
Facebook—PeMSAA AU

E mail Contact ;
Dr Nayanananda Lekamge
Dr Shantha Sooriyabandara
Dr Janakie Ratnayake

President@Pemsaaaaustralasia.org
Secretary@Pemsaaaaustralasia.org
Treasurer@Pemsaaaaustralasia.org