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SLMA NEWS+

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Foundation Sessions

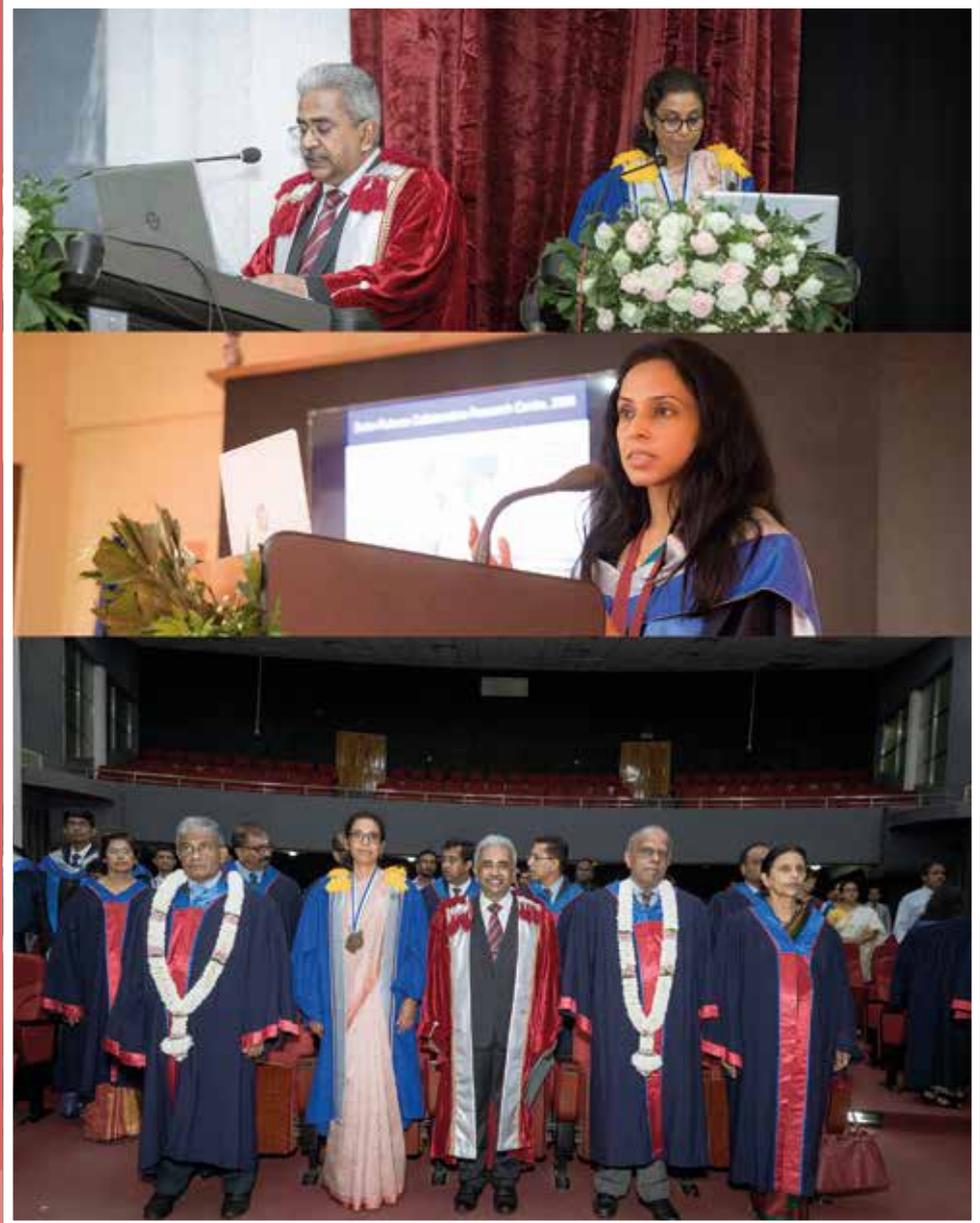
Page 9-10

Kids Art Creations

Page 17-18

The story of 'aragalaya street medics'

Page 21-22



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Foundation Sessions 2023



SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Sri Lanka Medical Association invites you to submit abstracts for the 137th Anniversary International Medical Congress 2024

Get ready to submit your abstract/s

- **The deadline to submit abstracts is 31st March 2024 23:59 Sri Lankan Time**
- **Await more details soon**
- **Further details will be available latest by early February on <https://slma.lk/>**

- One author will be permitted to submit a **MAXIMUM of three (03) abstracts ONLY**
- All authors of abstracts should be member of the SLMA, if they are eligible for membership
- All research studies should have obtained ethics approval
- All clinical trials should be registered with a Clinical Trials Registry. Authors should provide the letter of approval from an accepted Ethics Review Committee (ERC) for research studies and registration number for clinical trials, upon request
- All the authors should declare any conflict of interests during their presentation at the congress
- The SLMA considers plagiarism as serious professional misconduct. All abstracts are screened for plagiarism and when identified, the abstract and any other abstracts submitted by the same author will be rejected. The head of the institutions of the author of the paper will be informed of the professional misconduct
- The SLMA reserves the right to make alterations and to edit the contents of the abstract to improve the quality of presentation

Thank you!

Honorary Secretary

Sri Lanka Medical Association

For further details please contact: The Sri Lanka Medical Association, 'Wijerama House', No.6, Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo-07. Tel: [+94-112-693324](tel:+94-112-693324), Email: office@slma.lk

SLMA News+ Editorial Committee 2023

CO-EDITORS

Dr Kumara Mendis
Dr Sumithra Tissera

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Dr Sarath Gamini de Silva
Dr BJC Perera
Professor A Pathmeswaran
Dr Achala Balasuriya
Dr Sajith Edirisinghe
Professor Clifford Perera

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Ayesha Thennakoon

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CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	2-3
ACTIVITIES IN BRIEF	6-8
FOUNDATION SESSIONS	9-13
SLMA MEDICAL DANCE	14-15
KIDS ART CREATIONS	17-18
AGM	19
FEATURE ARTICLE	
Sanity amidst chaos: The story of 'aragalaya street medics'	21-22
MISCELLANY	
Some intricacies of successful public speaking	24



SLMA President

Dr Vinya Ariyaratne

MD, MPH, MSc Com. Med. MD Com, Med., FCCPSL
Specialist in Community Medicine,
Past President of College of Community
Physicians of Sri Lanka,
President of Sarvodaya Movement

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President's Message

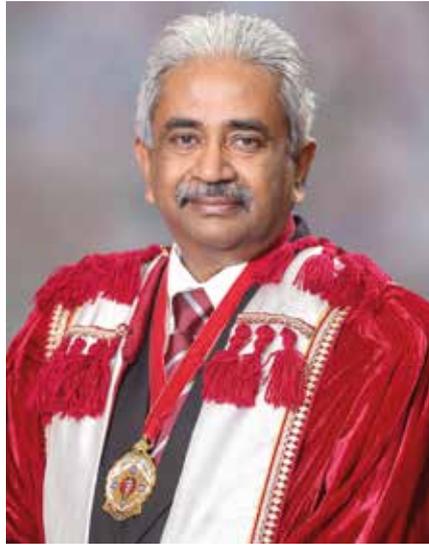
Dear SLMA Members,

Completing a tenure of office as the President of our country's premier medical association is a journey laden with challenges, tasks, duties, and milestones. It is a position of immense honour and responsibility, offering a platform to influence change, advocate for advancements, and help to shape the future of healthcare.

I was elected as the 129th President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) on 21st December 2022. At the Presidential Induction held on 14th January 2023, I proposed as the theme for my tenure, **"Towards Humane Healthcare: Excellence, Equity, and Community"**. It was not a mere theme but a fervent call to action.

The broader socio-economic and political context at the time of assuming the Presidency was complex, daunting and challenging. The severe impact of the economic crisis was beginning to be evident in the form of shortages of medicines, reagents, consumables, and equipment. There was evidence of rising costs of prices of medicines and escalation of out-of-pocket expenditure for our patients. There were definitive signs of a looming crisis in the health sector with exodus of medical personnel to other countries. Immediate attention was required to fulfil the mandate of the SLMA of *"Serving the nation – serving the profession"*. Building on the great work carried out by previous Presidents of SLMA during the crisis ridden years, I had the full backing and the commitment of a Council who placed full confidence in various interventions that were proposed to prevent and mitigate the negative impact of the crisis on the health and wellbeing of our people.

While initiating and carrying out the routine activities of the association



such as clinical meetings, symposia, seminars, lectures, workshops etc., and holding Annual Academic Sessions, our attention had to be immediately directed to advocacy on urgent issues affecting public health. This required engaging with the public, the administrators and policy makers. Throughout the year, based on scientific evidence, the SLMA was able to, engage with the public through media on various issues related to diseases as well as the healthcare delivery system. SLMA was an authoritarian, impartial and credible source of information for the media and public. We were also proactive. We could identify quite early, emerging health issues including those which might cause undue panic among the public (eg. Nipah virus) and provide accurate and timely information. Wide coverage was offered to SLMA in both print and electronic media; a reflection of our credibility.

A central issue that SLMA had to extensively address has been irregularities associated with the medicinal drug approval process by the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA) and purchase of medicines by the Health Ministry. SLMA lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and continued to

take up a principled stand, purely with the interest of patients in mind.

Advocacy emerges as a central tenet. Championing causes that resonate with the medical community, advocating for healthcare reforms, and spearheading campaigns to address pertinent issues, galvanize support and effect change. Advocacy is not just about rhetoric; it is about enacting policies that improve patient care, bolster medical education, and enhance the overall healthcare service delivery.

At a policy level, SLMA actively participated in formulation of strategies, consultations on health financing, private medical education, primary health care, non-communicable diseases, use of human genetic material and data, prevention of road traffic crashes, sexual exploitation of children and marital rape.

2023 has been a pivotal year. The world celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet, we have seen major armed conflicts such as the Ukraine war and the Israeli - Palestinian war which claimed hundreds and thousands of innocent lives. There was gross violation of the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UHDR) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

This year, the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrated its 75th Anniversary. The SLMA's Ceylon Medical Journal (CMJ) published a Special Issue to mark the 75 years of partnership between WHO and Sri Lanka.

The role of a national professional medical association goes beyond serving the membership. Fostering collaboration become indispensable. It is about empowering others, inclusivity, and advocating for the collective voice of the medical fraternity. We are very pleased that we were able to successfully

hold SLMA Foundation Sessions in Jaffna, after a lapse of 13 years. We also had Joint Regional Meetings covering all the provinces in the country, reaching our members far and wide.

Setting achievable goals aligned with the association's mission, whilst accommodating the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, becomes paramount. Initiating programmes that cater to professional development, research, and public health outreach serves as a cornerstone for progress. Collaboration with policymakers, and other professional colleges is indispensable to drive impactful change.

Navigating challenges has been an inevitable part of our journey. On certain critical issues, building consensus has been a bit tricky. From advocating policy changes to addressing the needs of a diverse membership base, adeptly managing these challenges require resilience and adaptability. Of course, overcoming such obstacles fosters growth, enabling the association to

emerge stronger and more responsive to the ever-evolving healthcare paradigm.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of completing a tenure of office is witnessing the tangible impact of the association's initiatives. Be it fostering a supportive environment for medical professionals, contributing to groundbreaking research, or advocating for policies that positively influence patient outcomes. Tangible outcomes serve as testaments to collective efforts and unwavering commitment.

Moreover, nurturing future leaders within the association ensures continuity and a legacy that extends beyond just a tenure of office. Mentoring and empowering aspiring professionals lays the groundwork for sustained progress, ensuring that the torch of leadership is passed on to capable hands in the years to come.

I wish to thank the members of the Council of the SLMA very sincerely for their support throughout the year. They were the indisputable strength behind

all the activities of the SLMA over the last year. They were the backstage heroes of all our achievements.

I have gone on record in my first message in this newsletter as the President of SLMA, that as medical professionals, it is our bounden duty to prioritize the well-being and welfare of all Sri Lankans, especially during difficult and uncertain times. We must take active steps to fulfil this responsibility without delay, in alignment with our shared vision '*Lankadipassa kiccesu ma pamaj*'. Let us work for the good of all Sri Lankans without delay in promoting the overall health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our nation.

Please allow me, in this last message of my tenure of office as the President of the SLMA, to wish the very best of health and prosperity to all our members, as well as the entire populace of our beautiful Motherland.

Dr Vinya Ariyaratne
President SLMA.



A Heartfelt Thank you!

'None of us got to where we are alone. Whether the assistance we received was obvious or subtle, acknowledging someone's help is a big part of understanding the importance of saying thank you'

- Harvey Mackay -

We are turning the final pages of our two year term as co-editors of the SLMA News+. The December 2023 issue would be our final newsletter.

Reflecting on the journey we have learnt many lessons and shared experiences with the newsletter team. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those who supported and encouraged us during the two-year period.

It was in December 2021, when the new President for 2022 was elected at the AGM and requested us to take over the editorial responsibilities of the SLMA Newsletter+.

The newsletter had kept improving since its inception. Especially after 2020 it developed into more than a monthly edition of SLMA news. The feature articles had the top clinicians contributing with their current best practice in a variety of domains.

As editors we were initially not certain whether we could keep up with the new 'Feature Articles' about current clinical practice and releasing the Newsletter in time. However due to contributions from clinicians with articles and the support team it became manageable.

A new feature was added to the Newsletter where we published narratives of doctors who were excelling in different fields part from medical practice. There were many multitalented doctors that had reached the top in arts to business that published their stories the Newsletter.

We would like to give special recognition and thanks to the contributors who with their diverse perspectives were the driving force of the success of the SLMA Newsletter+. Your commitment to sharing the knowledge and experiences has enriched our publication and made it a valuable resource for our readers.

Dr Jude Jayamaha, Professor Chamara Dalugama, Dr Nalinda Munasinghe, Dr K T Sundaresan, Professor Saroj Jayasinghe, Professor Chamila Mettananda, Dr Yasodha Rohanachandra, Dr Shirom Rajeev Siriwardana, Dr Lasantha Malavige, Professor Samath D Dharmaratne, Professor Anuradha Dassanayake, Dr Lahiru Akuratiyage, Dr Sajith Edirisinghe, Dr Indira

Kahawita, Dr Dayan Rajapakse, Dr Sarath Gamini De Silva, Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, Professor Dileep De Silva, Dr Hasitha Tissera, Dr Jayantha Weeraman, Dr Udana Ratnapala, Dr Jayantha Jayasuriya, Dr Lucian Jayasuriya, Dr L L Amila Isuru, Professor Clifford Perera, Dr Kalum Deshapriya, Dr Neomal De Silva, Dr Dulani Kottahachchi, Professor Miyuru Chandradasa, Dr Anil Samaranayake, Professor Sachith Mettananda, Dr B J C Perera, Professor Pijanjal de Zoysa, Dr Ajith Amarasinghe, Dr Chathurika Dandeniya, Professor Aranjan Karunanayake, Dr Udayangani Ramadasa, Dr Ravini Karunathilake, Dr Ruwan Wathugala, Professor Neelika Malavige, Dr Suhashini Ratnatunga, Professor Chandanie Wanigatunge, Professor Heshan Jayaweera, Dr Yasoma P.K. Weerasekara, Dr Wathsala S P Abeysinghe, Professor Shamila de Silva, Dr Mihiri Rubasignhe, Dr Lahiru Kodituwakku, Dr Ushani M Wariyapperuma, Dr A K Probhodana Ranaweera, Dr M R M Rishard, Dr Malik Fernando, Dr Dilini Wijesekara, Dr Shehan Silva, Dr Nirmala D Sirisena, Dr Nethrani Pathirana, Dr Dulani Kottahachchi, Professor Thilini Rajapakse, Professor Chrishantha Abeysena, Professor Shanthi Mendis, Dr Amitha Fernando, Dr Ruwanthi Jayasekara, Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha, Professor A Pathmeswaran, Dr B L J Mendis, Dr H L De Silva, Dr. Kalum Deshapriya, Dr. Chaminda Mathota, Professor Priyadarshani Galappatthy, Professor M I M De Zoysa, Professor Saman Gunatilake, Dr Padma S Gunaratne, Dr Anula Wijesundere, Dr Madushi Nanayakkara, Dr Duminda Yasaratne, Dr A Dayapala, Dr Ajith Karawita, Dr Kanchana Wijesinghe, Dr W A M Nilanthi, Dr Lasantha Kodituwakku, Dr K A Yohan Chamara, Dr Sankha Randanikumara, Dr Manilka R Sumanatilleke, Dr S A I U Jayawardana, Professor Shamali Abeyagunawardena, Dr Buddhika Alahakoon, Dr Thilina Wanigasekera, Dr R M M K Namal Rathnayaka, Dr Thilani Ratnayake, Dr Ariyaratne Manathunge, Dr Nimali Jayasuriya, Dr Murali Vallipurathan, Dr Achala Balasuriya, Dr Chathurie Suraweera, Dr Balachandran Kumarendran, Dr Udara Senarathne, Dr Neluwa-Liyanage R Indika, Dr Chinthana Perera, Dr Kawmadi Gunasekara, Dr Alaka Singhe, Dr Niroshan C Lokunarangoda, Dr Vajira Dharmawardene, Dr Kumara Mendis, Dr Ravi Jayawardena, Dr Rushanie de Silva, Dr Manuja Perera, Dr Naomali Amarasena, Dr Samandika Saparamadu, Dr Rasarie Wimalana & Dr Champika Gamakaranage

We want to thank our fellow editors for the unwavering help given to ensure the Newsletter maintains its high standards, from content creation to design and distribution.

Dr Kalyani Guruge, Professor A Pathmeswaran, Professor Shamila De Silva, Professor Senani Williams,

Professor Hasini Banneheka, Professor Clifford Perera, Dr Chamila Mettananda, Dr Achala Balasuriya, Professor Anuja Abayadeera, Dr Chathurie Suraweera & Dr Sajith Edirisinghe

A special mention need to be made of two very special persons in the editorial board, Dr BJC Perera and Dr Sarath Gamini de Silva, who edited all the articles that were published in the newsletters meticulously, giving attention to the intricacies of the language which was a key factor in publishing. They never ever refused our requests even if it was done at the last moment. We are fortunate to have had both of you in the team in 2022 & 2023, you showed unwavering commitment and support and a shared passion for our newsletter's success.

We want to acknowledge and express our gratitude to all the advertisers who partnered with us, believing in our vision. Your partnership has not only been a financial support but also a vote of confidence in the value we bring to our readers. Furthermore, we thank Ms Nadeesha who coordinated the advertising aspect that gave us the finances to maintain the high-quality printing of Newsletter.

Prime Land Group, Kalbe International Pvt Ltd, Blue Ocean Group of Companies, Anti-Malaria Campaign, Nestlé Health Science, BMICH, Pharmevo Pvt. Ltd, International Medical Campus (IMC Education), NDB Bank, Management & Science University (MSU), Asiri Health, Hatton National Bank (HNB), Wish fertility clinic, Havelock City, Ninewells Hospitals, Softlogic Retail (Pvt) Ltd, Hemas Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Ltd, Marina Square,

Lanka Reality Investment PLC, Edlocate (Pvt) Ltd, International Institute of Health Sciences (IIHS), Hemas Mobile Labs & Regen Renewable (Pvt) Ltd

Our magazine designers Mr Shashika Gunathilake & Ms Ayesha Thennakoon and the printer Kandy Offset Printers (Pvt.) Ltd, Kandy did a fantastic job for the last two years in the design and presentation quality of the Newsletter. They infused their creativity and expertise in each issue that finally gave the Newsletter the quality visual impact of the print and electronic end product.

Finally, we are much grateful to Professor Samath D Dharmaratne (President, 2022) and Dr Vinya Ariyaratne (President 2023) for the trust they placed on us and the free hand given to serve the SLMA as Co-editors for two consecutive years. We sincerely hope that we did justice to the trust placed on us.

As we conclude our term, we are excited about the future and the opportunities for the Newsletter. We are confident that the new Editor and the editorial board would take the Newsletter to a new level in the coming year.

May joy, peace and success follow you everywhere you go and whatever you do. Have a wonderful new year with your family and friends.

Dr Kumara Mendis
Dr Sumithra Tissera
Co-Editors of the Newsletter



Activities in Brief

(16th November 2023 - 22nd December 2023)

SLMA Saturday Talks

18th October

'Elderly patient presenting with forgetfulness: An approach to the initial assessment' by Dr Malsha Gunathilake, Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry, Colombo South Teaching Hospital (CSTH).

2nd December

'Evaluation of Polyneuropathy: A case base-based discussion' *Interventional Radiology: advancements, applications and future perspectives*' by Dr Kumarangie Vithanage, Senior Lecturer in Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya.

15th December

'Early pregnancy bleeding' by Dr Indunil Piyadigama, Senior Lecturer, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

Other Activities

17th November

The SLMA Expert Committee on Women's Health organized a seminar on 'Craze for skin fairness: Is it worth it?'

Dr Nayani Madarasinghe, Consultant Dermatologist, Colombo East Base Hospital, Mulleriyawa spoke on 'Is beautiful skin synonymous with fair skin?' and Professor Miyuru Chandradasa, Professor in Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya on 'The mind underneath the skin'.

26th November

The annual cricket encounter between the Sri Lanka Medical

Association & the Institute of Architects, was won convincingly by the SLMA team.



28th November

A clinical meeting was held with the collaboration of the Sri Lanka College of Radiologists.

Dr Amila Chandrakumara, Acting Neurologist, NHSL spoke on 'Imaging in stroke', Dr Praneeth Athukorale, Consultant Interventional Radiologist, NHSL on 'Interventional radiology on management of stroke', Dr Sathiyaseelan Maniharan, Consultant Interventional Radiologist, NHSL on 'Interventional radiology in acute & emergency trauma', Dr Dinithi Ashwini Herath, Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, University of Moratuwa on 'Imaging in paediatric acute abdomen'.



30th November

Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, President SLMA was selected as one of the 'TOP 10 Champions of Diversity' on the

International Men's Day 2023.

This event was organized by the Women in Management, Sri Lanka.



1st December

The President and few council members met the newly appointed Secretary Health, Dr Palitha Mahipala, to discuss the current problems faced by the health sector.

Dr Ananda Wijewickrama, President 2024, Dr Padma Gunaratne, Professor Indika Karunathilake, Dr Surantha Perera, Dr Manilka Sumanathilaka, Dr V Murali, Dr Sajith Edirisinghe and Dr Lahiru Kodituwakku attended the meeting on behalf of the SLMA council.



5th December

A clinical meeting was held with the collaboration of the Sri Lanka Dental Association on the topic *'Medical officers' role in prevention and early detection of oral disease'*.

Dr Nilantha Ratnayake, Consultant in Community Oral Health, Institute of Oral Health, Maharagama spoke on *'Introduction to dentistry & oral health'*, Dr Hematha Amarasinghe, Head, Department of Community Dental Health, University of Sri Jayawardenapura spoke on *'Prevention of common oral disease'* and Dr Suresh Shanmuganathan, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Sri Jayawardenapura spoke on *'Case presentation for early identification of oral mucosal disease'*.



7th December

Dr Vinya Ariyaratne President, SLMA was interviewed by Sirasa TV - 'Pathikada' on *'Health Sector 2024: Lessons learnt in the year 2023'*.



7th December

The SLMA Expert Committee on Communicable Diseases in collaboration with the National Influenza Centre, MRI, organized a symposium on *'The current surge in respiratory illness among children and adults in Sri Lanka'*.

Dr Jude Jayamaha, Consultant Medical Virologist, National Influenza Centre, MRI spoke on *'Virological aspects'*, Dr Neranjan Dissanayaka, Consultant Pulmonologist, TH Ratnapura on *'Mitigating the impact of recurrent respiratory epidemics'* and Dr Channa de Silva, Consultant Paediatric Pulmonologist on *'The impact, clinical spectrum and principles of management in children'*.

11th December

The SLMA Expert Committee on Women's Health organized a symposium on *'Marital rape in Sri Lanka: Issue that needs addressing'* to commemorate 16-day activism for prevention of violence against women & girls 2023'.

Dr Indira Kitulwatte, Professor in Forensic Medicine, University of Kelaniya spoke on *'Medico-legal aspects'*, Dr Mahesan Ganeshan, Consultant Psychiatrist, NIMH on *'Psychological aspects'*, Dr Sepali Kottegoda, Director Programmes of Women's Economic Rights & Media, Media Collective, Colombo on *'Socio-cultural aspects'* and Hon. Justice Kumudini Wickramasinghe, Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka on *'Marital rape laws: National & international'*.



12th December

A clinical meeting was held with the collaboration of the Sri Lanka College of Oncologists on the topic *'Management of Oesophageal Cancer'*.

Dr PW Rasanga Thissera, Senior Registrar in Clinical Oncology, Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama presented a case on *'Patients with lower oesophageal cancer'* and Dr PKD Pradeep, Consultant Oncologist, Teaching Hospital, Badulla spoke on *'Management of oesophageal malignancies'*.

13th December

SLMA Expert Committee on Disaster Management and Resilience in collaboration with the Tokyo Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Japan, Sri Lanka College of Military Medicine and Asia Pacific Alliance – Sri Lanka – for disaster management organized a webinar to share experience between Sri Lanka and Japan on Disaster Management.



The resource persons and their topics of discussion were as follows;

- 'An overview of disaster management in Sri Lanka'* by Dr Harischandra Yakandawala, Consultant in Public Health,
- 'Japan's Disaster Medical System'* by Mr. Akinori Wakai, Deputy Director, DMAT Secretariat MHLW, Japan,
- 'Landslide Mitigation in Sri Lanka'* by Dr. Pathmakumara Jayasinghe, Senior Lecturer in Geology, University of Colombo,
- 'A Decade of Impact: Lessons and Best Practices in Cross-Sector Collaboration in Emergencies'*,
- 'Beyond Borders: Linking Medical*

Aid to Search and Rescue Operations' by Mr. Yoshiki Toyokuni, DMAT Secretariat MHLW, Japan and *'Experience of Tsunami and Flood in Japan (Great East Earthquake etc)'* by Mr. Yoshiki Toyokuni, DMAT Secretariat MHLW, Japan.

The topics of the two panel discussions and the panelists were;

'Engagement of the Military in Disaster Management in Sri Lanka' by Major Lahiru Rathnaweera, Sri Lanka Army, Surg. Lcdr HSD Kudahetti, Sri Lanka Navy & Sqn Ldr. DGAAN Jayawardena, Sri Lanka Air Force and *'COVID-19 response of DMAT in Japan and Sri Lanka'* by Dr. Satoshi Kotani, DMAT secretariat MHLW, Japan, Prof Indika Karunathilake, Past President, Sri Lanka Medical Association and Dr. Sajith Edirisinghe

Honorary Secretary, Sri Lanka Medical Association.

14th December



The SLMA in collaboration with the Sri Lanka College of Microbiologists organized a symposium.

Professor Fritz Muhlschlegel, Honorary Professor Division of Natural Sciences, School of Biosciences, University of Kent, UK on *'From Schistosoma Haematobium circulating antigen research to candida albicans surgical voice prosthesis infections: Exploring clinical and academic eukaryotic microbiology'* and Professor Aravinda de Silva, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina on *'An update on Dengue Vaccines'*.

16th December

A shramadana was organized at SLMA to clean up the premises and whitewash the building. It was an initiative of the President. Many council members donated cash, material and manpower for the cause.

A few council members, SLMA staff and workers came for the shramadana.



19th December

A meeting with the executive committee of GMOA was held to discuss the Central CPD mechanism. This was also used as an opportunity to mutually appreciate the positive relationship and joint action taken during the year to address critical issues in the health sector.



21st December

The SLMA expert committee on Prevention of Road Traffic crashes organized a press conference to educate the public on prevention of deaths and injuries due to road traffic crashes during the festive season.

The resource persons were Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, President SLMA, Dr Surantha Perera, Consultant Paediatrician, Mr Dilantha Malagamuwa, Brand Ambassador, Safe Sri Lanka Road Safety Initiative, Mr Manoj Rangala, SSP, Director, City Traffic, HQ, Dr Ruwan Thushara Mاتيwalage, Convener/ Secretary, Mr Charaka Perera, Member, Mr Eranda Perera, Member Eng. Keerthi Kodithuwakku, Member of the committee.



Foundation Sessions

This year's Foundation sessions were held with the collaboration of the Jaffna Medical Association (JMA). The last time Foundation sessions were held in Jaffna was in 2010 during the Presidency of Professor Narada Warnsuriya.

Many Past Presidents (09) and council members (11) travelled from Colombo for the sessions.

Day 1:

The inauguration session of the Foundation sessions was held at the Auditorium, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

The councils (both SLMA & JMA) were escorted to the auditorium by the traditional Hindu dancers and both the National anthem and the JMA anthem were played before the opening of the sessions.

The guests were welcomed by Dr. Chrishanthi Rajasooriyar, President, JMA and Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, President, SLMA.

SLMA Awards for papers presented at the 136th Anniversary International Medical Congress, Research Awards and Awards for Excellence in Health Journalism for year 2023 were presented to the winners jointly by the Presidents of SLMA and JMA.

Professor Samath D Dharmartne, Immediate Past President (2022) spoke on *'The road traffic crashes in Sri Lanka: The man-made epidemic'* and Dr Palitha Abeykoone, Past

President SLMA delivered the Dr EM Wijerama Oration on the topic *'Current concerns in health development in Sri Lanka: a view from the boundary.'*

The culmination of the sessions was a beautiful cultural performance of par excellence delivered by students of the Faculty of Medicine. There were two dance – Hindu and Kandyan and a synchronized melody of English, Tamil and Sinhala.

Day 2:

Before the start of the foundation sessions proper an Unveiling of the portrait of the Founder President of Jaffna Medical Association, Dr Sinnatamby Subramaniam was held at the JMA Office situated within the Teaching Hospital Jaffna by Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, President, SLMA & Dr. Chrishanthi Rajasooriyar, President, JMA.

The resource persons and topics of discussion were as follows;

The keynote address was delivered on *'Recalibrating Primary Health Care for Sri Lanka's Next Generation'* by Dr Alaka Singh, WHO Representative, Sri Lanka.

Guest lectures were delivered on *'Reversal of Diabetes: A myth or reality'* by Dr Manilka Sumanathilaka, Consultant Endocrinologist and *'Impact of climatic crises on children'* by Dr Surantha Perera, Consultant Pediatrician, *'Prevention and early detection of oral cancer: A Sri*

Lankan experience' by Dr Hemantha Amarasinghe, Consultant in Dental Public Health, *'Oral cancer: Current research & involvement in slaked lime OSCC'* by Dr Sajith Edirisinghe, Senior Lecturer in Anatomy and *'Birds of Northern Province, Sri Lanka'* by Dr Murali Vallipurathan, Consultant Community Physician.

The two symposia on *'Interface between medicine and psychiatry'* had Dr Sujanitha Vathulan, Senior Lecturer in Medicine speaking on *'Mental health in the hands of an internist'*, Dr Chathurie Suraweera, Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry on *'Prescribing psychotropics in non-psychiatric settings'* and Professor S Sivayokan, Professor of Psychiatry on *'The role of liaison psychiatry in poor resource settings'* and another on *'Neurology'* had Dr. Ajantha Keshavaraj, Consultant Neurologist, Jaffna Teaching Hospital speaking on *'What is new in Management of Stroke?'*, Dr. Saamir Mohideen, Consultant Neurologist on *'New onset seizure diagnosis and management'* and Dr. Padma Gunaratne, Consultant Neurologist on *'Management of Primary Headaches in older adults'*.

The Sir Marcus Fernando Oration was delivered on the topic *'Reducing antibiotic prescriptions for viral acute respiratory infection in Sri Lanka'* by Professor Gayani Tillekeratne, Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, Duke University School of Medicine, USA.

Inauguration









SLMA Medical Dance

The Medical Dance was held on 8th December 2023 at the Grand Ballroom, Hotel Galadari, Colombo from 8.00 pm onwards. All arrangements, logistics and the finer details were worked out by a very capable Dance Committee of the SLMA ably led by the Social Secretaries Drs Pramilla Senanayake & Nilanka Anjalee Wickramasinghe.

There were around 210 guests who had a really wonderful time at an evening of superlative music complemented and adorned by a fabulous buffet dinner.

Music was provided by 'Misty' and DJ Naushad took turns at short intervals to provide excellent and continuous music for dancing.

Many prizes were also awarded to the winners of a plethora of draws and contests during the event.





*Some of the photographs taken from Hi online



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Colombo 05, Sri Lanka
Tel: + 94 11 204 9999

E-mail: infoivf@ninemwellshospital.lk web: www.ninemwellshospital.lk



SLMA Kids Art; The connection

Dr Kalyani Guruge
Council Member

In order to write under this title, I went on a journey on a fact-finding mission about Art and Painting.

That quest gave me some precious jewels which became almost a turning point for me to virtually induce me to drop medicine and pick up art instead.

'I dream of painting and then I paint my dreams'

- Vincent Van Gogh -

'Every child is an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up'

- Pablo Picasso -

'Creativity takes courage'

- Henri Matisse -

On further exploration focused on art, I came across an array of very attractive descriptions.

Art is the conscious creation of something beautiful and meaningful, using skill and imagination.

Art provides a platform to voice our feelings, thoughts and identities. It is an unparalleled medium enabling people to convey sentiments and share experiences.

Art is a universal language which transcends the world. Language is not a barrier to enjoy, feel calm, and be uplifted in mind and spirit, to feel good while creating or appreciating a work of art.

Art experience boosts critical thinking, while teaching students to take time to be more careful and thorough in how they observe the world. Creating art requires problem solving skills and decision making. In every drawing made, one has to try to solve the problems involved in clarifying, interpreting and communicating what is important to each person.

An art education builds a variety of important thinking skills that can be applied to real – world situation.

Considering all the effects of art on a child, one can clearly state that decision of SLMA to conduct Child Art Creations as an annual event in the calendar is most certainly one of the wisest steps.

'The solution to adult problems of tomorrow depends on large measure upon how our children grow up today'

- Margaret Mead

Kids, art, and the SLMA connection started in 2016 as a way of involving children who accompanied their parents to participate in SLMA Run & Walk. Painting and drawing while parents walked evolved into getting children to submit their creations beforehand which was judged by a panel and the winners received prizes while parents participated in adult events of the Run & Walk.

The venue shifted from Viharamahadevi park open air theatre in 2016 to the BMICH lawn and then to the SLMA Auditorium in 2019 and we disengaged art from sports. We started the event as a collaborative effort with other stakeholders – with the Ministry of Education and also with the Child Development Ministry.

The experience gained through years had brought confidence to the SLMA to conduct the event by ourselves.

Selecting the best out of 3000 – 4000 art submissions every year, done on given themes, the latest being *'What Makes Me Happy'* is not at all a walk in the park. Every year we obtained best support possible from judges of aesthetic department of education ministry and also artists and art teachers.

To judge thousands of art work, considering the clarity of the theme, creativity and uniqueness, overall design, colour & tone and overall impression is very definitely a Herculean task.

This year we were supported by Mrs. Nisansala Rajapakse, a reputed artist, and Mr. Upul Jayarathne, a reputed teacher in the University of Visual & Performing Arts.

The bright and eager young faces filling up our SLMA auditorium and our displaying their colourful creations, breathing joy, blue skies with puffs of white clouds, birds chirping on trees, flower blooming, families at work in gardens and fields, pets rolling around, rivers and streams flowing by, little ones at play are our precious gifts after months of challenging work.

I was compelled to feel that these are the things that life is made of.



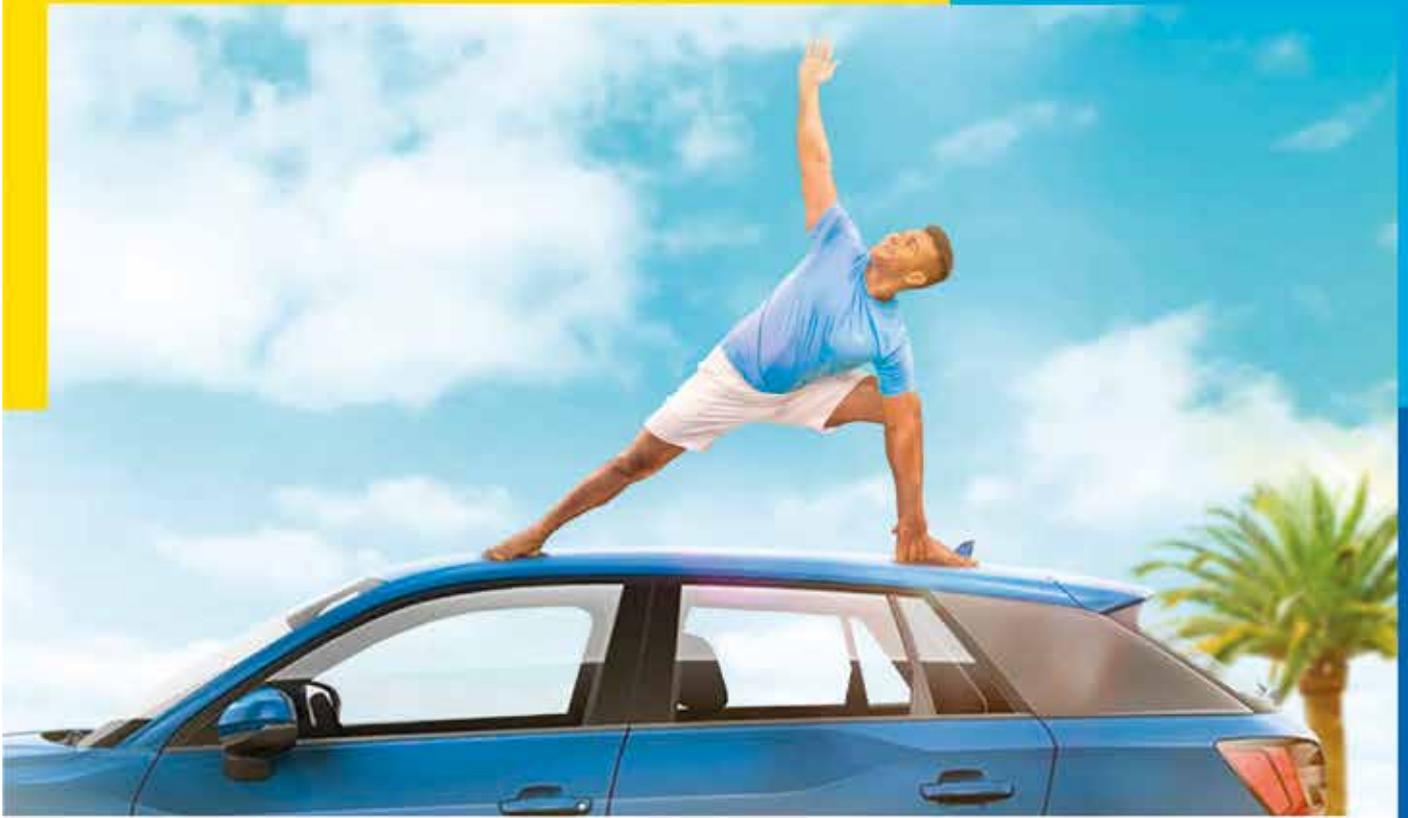
The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM of the SLMA was held at the Dr NDW Lionel Memorial Auditorium. Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, The President, presented a brief outline of the activities undertaken in 2023 and Dr Sajith Edirisinghe, Honorary Secretary, presented a comprehensive report of activities undertaken during the year.

Mr Justin Silva, the office assistant, was felicitated for his 19 years of service to the SLMA and wished a happy and healthy retirement by the President, Council and all members present at the AGM.

Dr Ananda Wijewickrama was confirmed as the 130th President of SLMA for the year 2024 and he introduced his theme for SLMA for the next year as *'Ensuring Equity in Healthcare during Challenging Times'*.





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Sanity Amidst Chaos: The Story of 'Aragalaya Street Medics'

Dr Lahiru Kodituwakku

*MBBS, MSc (Community Medicine),
MSc (Disaster Risk Reduction & Development),
MBA, PgD in Health Sector Disaster Management*

Healthcare institutions are often considered to be sanctuaries amidst crises and wars. Not only do they provide lifesaving health services but also give refuge to the most vulnerable, when there is nowhere else to go. This is most evident in the ongoing crisis in Palestine. Heart wrenching images of scores of wounded, including innocent children, being rushed to hospitals and subsequent chaos within the hospitals are portrayed and aired through the media daily. Marred by resource constraints, amidst the most difficult circumstances one can ever imagine, they are in a constant and desperate struggle to keep basic lifesaving services running. Furthermore, despite the so called 'Immunity' under the international law from being battered in a warzone, hospitals and ambulances have become a target for indiscriminate bombings and even being caught in crossfires.



In a dire situation where hospitals are no longer safe, inaccessible, or unable to cope with the influx of patients, what would be the solution? When people are dying in the streets, ambulances are targeted and wounded are left to find their own way to safety, who will take care of the most in need of urgent care? These questions have been raised repeatedly not only in warzones but also during mass protests, civil strives and all types of disasters where conventional modalities of providing healthcare are severely challenged. It calls for a certain degree of sanity amidst the chaos.

'Street Medics' a concept that first originated during the Civil Rights Movement of the United States in the early sixties, has been highlighted by many scholars and activists alike, as an alternative mechanism to provide urgent first aid, treatment, and basic life support during emergencies. Street medics usually comprise

of volunteers of diverse backgrounds, united by the common goal of providing essential care and treatment for the most vulnerable during crises. These medics could be well trained physicians in trauma and injury management, first aid providers, activists or just good Samaritans who just respond to the call for help! During the anti-capitalist and counter globalization movements in the US in early 1990s and 2000s, numerous groups of street medics operated within the protesters, when hospitals were inaccessible, overwhelmed and some injured protesters refused hospital care due to the fear of being arrested by law enforcement. They often provided care for trauma victims, injuries sustained due to crowd control weapons and elements, as well as general conditions such as dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Global experiences on Street Medics are numerous. However, do we have our own brand to go in line with the rest of the world? YES, we certainly do.

In early 2022, Sri Lanka plunged into turmoil amidst an unprecedented rise in civic activism and sustained peoples' protests in response to the economic meltdown, corruption, and poor governance by successive governments. People took to the streets in numbers, demanding that their rights be reinstated, culminating in a mass protest movement, popularly known as 'Aragalaya' (*The Struggle*). Sporadic street agitations gradually moved to the iconic Galle Face Green, where thousands of protesters occupied the premises and organized daily agitations, vigils and protests, attended by thousands from all over Sri Lanka. In reminiscence of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement in the USA..., protesters, activists, and civil rights groups, camped at the premises, which is in the heart of Colombo, closer to the seats of power, causing daily confrontations with the Police and Armed Forces.



Socially conscious doctors along with humanitarian organizations anticipated casualties among the agitating public. A few amongst them, armed with backpacks containing essential medical supplies for trauma care took to the streets voluntarily, mingled with the protesters and provided urgent medical care at the site. However, as the agitations grew in numbers, it was evident that a much larger scale organized attempt was required to meet the demand. This paved the way to form a voluntary street medic group connected through social media platforms, calling the doctors, nurses, medical and nursing students, and volunteers for urgent medical action in the streets. They were backed by the able support of Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka Red Cross, St. John’s Ambulance Service and 1990 Suwasariya Ambulance Service for casualty extraction and transfer for further specialized care.



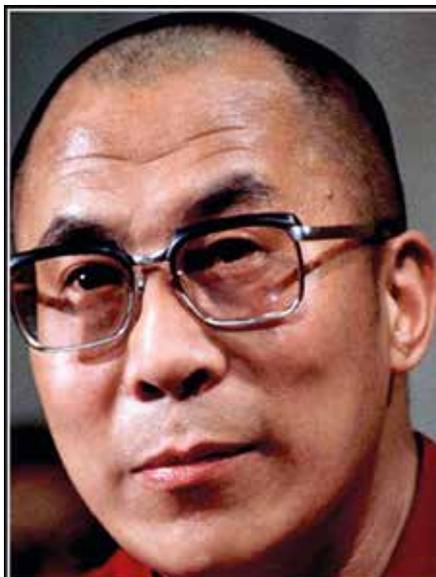
As the street agitations moved to the Galle Face Green, a field medical unit was established in partnership with Sarvodaya, Red Cross, and St. John’s. A core-coordination group was formed to liaise with diverse stakeholders. This included patient care planning, coordination of donations, mass casualty planning and prompt evacuations to hospitals. Over 400 doctors including specialists in the fields of trauma care and emergency medicine, nurses and First Aid providers came onboard, making it a 24x7 operation. Medical students joined in a roster basis to scale up operations whenever necessary.

Subsequently, the basic unit was converted to a fully-fledged field medical unit with emergency facilities and four ambulances placed in the camp. Psychological First Aid, medical clinics, dental and physiotherapy services were provided to resident activists in addition to the care provided at the site of protests. Within a span of three months, Street Medics served over 20,000 patients both at the camp and the streets, with over 1000 ambulance runs and critical transfers. Guided by the principles of humanitarianism and medical ethics, they provided the necessary care, not only for the protesters, but also for injured law enforcement officers alike. These care providers mostly worked back stage, sans any fanfare.



In the final analysis, this voluntary humanitarian effort could be identified as a great example of providing urgent medical assistance during a crisis when conventional medical services are restricted and or inaccessible. Further, it also demonstrated how the concept of Street Medics could be scaled up to expand urgent medical services in a challenging environment.

The concept of Street Medics is not an alternative method to provide urgent help anymore! It is a lifeline that could preserve the ‘Right to Health’ for the masses under duress and pandemonium. Therefore, it is also high time for the medical fraternity to recognize and acknowledge the importance of Street Medics and explore the best possible ways to integrate it into mainstream medicine for the betterment of the most vulnerable and oppressed during times of incontrovertible need.



Encountering sufferings will definitely contribute to the elevation of your spiritual practice, provided you are able to transform calamity and misfortune into the path.

— Dalai Lama —

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Some Intricacies of Successful Public Speaking

Dr B. J. C. Perera

Public speaking is a science, and an art. Whenever possible, one needs to prepare carefully beforehand. It may be a scientific presentation, an erudite lecture, a welcome address, a toast, an after-dinner speech, an accolade for a great achievement of another..., etc.

Following are some suggestions that would help our readers to be effective public speakers.



- Sometimes you could be called upon to present a speech at very short notice or on the spur of the moment. Then you have to muster your wits very quickly and make the most of it. Have it clearly in your mind as to what you are going to say.
- Try to start with a line that immediately helps to hold the attention of the audience. A sentence laced with some humility is useful for a start, followed by a line with a veiled suggestion that what you are going to present is one that would make the audience to sit up and take notice. A study undertaken for the first time in the world will certainly garner the attention of the audience.
- Speak clearly with appropriate modulation of your voice, while pitching it at a suitable level. Generally, a low to medium pitch is quite attractive, especially if it is embellished by suitable decibel variations. Avoid unusually high pitching of the voice. Go at a reasonable pace, neither too slow and languid, nor very fast, like an express train.
- Correct pronunciation is absolutely vital. You need to work at it. Well-orchestrated pauses for emphasis, with even loud but clearly audible whispering at times, all add to the glamour of the presentation. If you combine funny anecdotes to the talk, allow time for laughter from the audience and follow it up with a humorous phrase or a suitable witticism.
- Try to avoid significant pauses where you are actually thinking of what to say next. You may be a bit lost

in such situations. Long silent pauses are dreadful. Worse than that, avoid making meaningless sounds to fill in the spaces while you are thinking of what to say next. Some such sounds are "ahhhh.....", "hmmmm....", "welllllllll.....", etc. The "**ahhh counts**", as they are called by the Toastmasters, should be reduced drastically, and are best made



- It is disastrous to use repetitive words or phrases virtually at the end of each and every sentence quite regularly. Such words or phrases are "you see", "understand?", "you understand?", "is it clear?" "understood?", "you get what I mean?" "if you can see", "OK?", "alright" "now, then"..., etc. Also, try and avoid superfluous words and phrases and unnecessary adjectives. There is no need to say "very normal"., if it is normal, it is normal; there is no degree of normality.
- Some phrases like "In spite of all that", "It is not rocket science", "In this day and age....", "The whole point of the exercise is", would add glamour **only** if used sparingly. Frequent repetitions of these, defeat the purpose. At best use them just once or maximum twice, during an entire presentation or a speech. Do not go on repeating the same.
- Try to combine amusing anecdotes and even slightly naughty ones, depending on the circumstances and the audience. The way they are presented is crucial to evoke the expected response of appreciation of the yarns.
- Finish the talk in a telling way. Just do not say "Thank You". Your gratitude can be expressed in better ways. The parting shot should be so good as to evoke spontaneous applause or perhaps even a standing ovation. Sri Lankan audiences are quite reluctant to give standing ovations !!!

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