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Reflecting on the Resounding Success of the 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress of the Sri Lanka Medical Association

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Bridging Local Action and Global Horizons: Reflections on the 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress of the Sri Lanka Medical Association

The SLMA Monthly

Official Newsletter of the
Sri Lanka Medical Association

JULY 2026

● A Special Issue for the 139th Anniversary
International Medical Congress of the SLMA 2026

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to Wellness:
Reframing Maternal
and Child Health in
Sri Lanka amidst
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The SLMA Medical Congress Retrospective: Innovation, Dialogue, and Community

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FROM THE EDITORS



Dr Lahiru Kodituwakku
Co-Editor



Dr Kumara Mendis
Co-Editor

Mapping the Future of Healthcare Delivery; Triumphs and Transformations at the 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress of the SLMA 2026

This issue of The SLMA Monthly captures the momentum of a historic milestone, the resounding success of our 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress 2026. Drawing over 1,100 delegates from all corners of the world, this year's congress stood out for its pioneering approach of bridging all disciplines of clinical medicine, health innovation, research and health policy. By embedding multi-stakeholder policy forums directly into cutting-edge clinical tracks, the scientific programme created a unique ecosystem where medical advancements were transformed into actionable national health strategies.

This special issue brings you comprehensive coverage of the

groundbreaking collaborations that defined the event. Inside, we highlight our landmark regional alliances, key session outputs, notable outcomes and the way forward. Readers will also experience the vibrant camaraderie of our community through highlights from the lively Doctors' Concert and fiercely contested SLMA debate. Captured across these pages is a rich visual chronicle featuring pictures from the grand inauguration and all four action-packed days of proceedings. Furthermore, this issue features extracts from the Dr S.C Paul Memorial Oration, with highlights from the remaining orations to follow in subsequent issues.

As the SLMA moves forward to consolidate these outcomes at both policy and implementation levels, we invite you to dive into these pages and join us in transforming these shared insights into a healthier nation.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr Manilka Sumanatillake

132nd President of Sri Lanka Medical Association



THE RESOUNDING SUCCESS OF THE 139TH ANNIVERSARY INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS 2026

Dear Members and Colleagues,

It is with great pride and immense satisfaction that I write to celebrate the monumental success of our 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress, which concluded on a historic high at Cinnamon Life, City of Dreams. Guided by this year's pivotal theme, *"Wellness in the Nation through Local and Global Partnerships"*, the congress brought together over 1,100 delegates. This massive turnout fostered a dynamic ecosystem of academic excellence, clinical innovation, and collective determination. A foundational pillar of this year's achievement was our landmark collaboration with the International Diabetes Federation – South-East Asia Region (IDF-SEA), which placed a critical spotlight on non-communicable diseases. Furthermore, our robust alliances with esteemed development and social inclusion partners—such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Special Olympics Asia Pacific—broadened our strategic scope, successfully bridging clinical advancements with essential policy, health equity, and societal inclusivity.

A defining specialty of this year's scientific programme was the innovative combination of traditional clinical medicine streams with high-level policy forums, effectively bridging the critical gap between health policy and clinical medicine. The agenda seamlessly integrated cutting-edge clinical tracks—such as advanced therapeutics in Type 1 Diabetes, multi-disciplinary cardiology paradigms, and genomic medicine—with multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Landmark policy forums directly tackled modern systemic challenges, including the Wellness Policy Forum, Digitalization for Health, workshops on health systems disaster preparedness, and the Special Olympics Workshop dedicated to inclusive healthcare futures for persons with intellectual disabilities. By facilitating these vital overlaps,

the congress successfully transformed clinical insights into cohesive, macroscopic health strategies.

The scientific programme highlights showcased an extraordinary breadth of expertise, starting with clinical frontiers in all disciplines of clinical medicine to novel technologies from Artificial Intelligence and beyond. Crucial operational barriers were tackled in collaborative sessions reviewing the regulation and procurement of national medical supplies, alongside a joint study with the Centre for Combating Tobacco (CCT) exploring the commercial determinants of health. The academic discourse concluded dynamically with high-impact plenaries on global obesity trends and a fiercely contested SLMA debate on whether artificial intelligence does more harm than benefit to clinical practice.



Adding immense value to this year's academic line-up were the specialized workshops, notably the session on strengthening the clinical trial ecosystem in Sri Lanka to map our homegrown research pathway, and a landmark celebratory symposium organized by the Ceylon Medical Journal (CMJ) tracking publication ethics and research integrity frameworks. Beyond the rigid schedules of clinical lectures, the camaraderie of our medical community was beautifully captured during the keenly contested SLMA Quiz, as well as the vibrant Doctors' Concert, which provided a spectacular evening of relaxation and fellowship on the final day of the congress.

This year's congress was also marked by several historic milestones and proclamations. We proudly witnessed the publication of *"Pioneers in Healing: The Presidents Who Shaped Sri Lanka's Healthcare (Volume II)"* by Dr. Malik Fernando, a remarkable text documenting our rich medical heritage. In a major step forward for preventative health, the SLMA Non-Communicable Disease Committee, together with collaborative partners, officially inaugurated a No Added Sugar Yogurt initiative to target the national obesity and diabetes epidemic. Furthermore, the event culminated in the signing of the historic Colombo Declaration by the International Diabetes Federation South East Asia region, establishing a unified regional blueprint to combat diabetes.

We are already witnessing immediate, highly positive outcomes translating from these discussions into national action. Most notably, the publication of our report on clinical audits on high-cost medications in selected state sector hospitals has prompted swift administrative reform, with the Ministry of Health appointing a special three-member expert committee to thoroughly study the findings and develop robust national guidelines. Furthermore, the congress is giving rise to critical roadmap documents, including upcoming policy briefs on Disaster and Climate Resilience in the Health Sector following the UNDP-facilitated plenary session, alongside several impact-focused policy briefs emerging from the distinct Policy Forum workshops, including the Mind Menu, Shri Chi, and Plate for Change sessions. Additionally, together with the National Intercollegiate committee of the SLMA, we are planning several follow up actions based on the discussions at the session on 'Issues related to regulation and procurement of medical supplies. These will include a proposed meeting with Attorney General Department, the MSD, SPC and intercollegiate

committee to discuss concerns about giving recommendations on tender evaluations of medicines and a high level discussion between SLMA, NMRA and SPC to identify and facilitate a mechanism for compassionate access to orphan drugs.

An academic endeavour of this magnitude requires an extraordinary collective effort, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this event seamless. I deeply thank our Conference Chair, Prof. Dulani Kottachchi, our Secretary, Dr. Isshani Fernando, alongside the dynamic Scientific Committee and the Organizing Committee for designing such a forward-thinking, comprehensive programme. I also extend our profound gratitude to the Ministry of Health for their unwavering support throughout the entire planning and execution of this conference. My sincere appreciation goes to our esteemed orators and abstract reviewers for upholding rigorous academic standards. I express my thanks to the indefatigable SLMA staff, whose behind-the-scenes precision kept operations flawless. The rich dialogue throughout the sessions was driven by our phenomenal local and international faculty, who brought world-class insights into our panels. I also thank our inquisitive delegates, whose active participation defined the vibrant spirit of the congress, and express deep gratitude to our partnering organizations and generous well-wishers for their steadfast support. While it is impossible to thank every individual by name, please know that your immense contribution is deeply valued.

Looking ahead, the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) remains strictly committed to ensuring this event is more than an annual memory. We will actively work towards consolidating the outcomes of this conference at both policy and implementation levels, transforming our shared clinical-policy insights into tangible actions that will strengthen healthcare delivery nationwide.

BRIDGING LOCAL ACTION AND GLOBAL HORIZONS: REFLECTIONS ON THE 139TH ANNIVERSARY INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS OF THE SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Professor Dulani Kottachchi

Conference Chair



The Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) recently convened its prestigious 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress, establishing a formidable benchmark for academic scholarship, clinical innovation, and cross-border cooperation. Guided by the overarching theme, *“Wellness in the Nation through Local and Global Partnerships,”* the four-day landmark assembly emphasized that contemporary medical challenges necessitate collaborative frameworks transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries and geographical confines.

Synergistic Local and International Collaborations

The 139th Congress derived profound distinction from its collaborative staging alongside the **International Diabetes Federation South-East Asia Region**. This strategic alliance harmonized the expertise of eminent international authorities and leading Sri Lankan clinicians onto a unified academic platform.

The scientific assembly was bolstered by a distinguished cohort of professionals, researchers and academicians:

- 61 Overseas Faculty Members: Representing South-East Asia, South Asia, Australia, the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States.
- 88 Local Faculty Members: Demonstrating the exceptional caliber and active intellectual engagement of the domestic medical fraternity.

Concurrently, the Congress Policy Forum orchestrated pivotal engagements with regional and international entities including **Special Olympics Asia Pacific, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO) and numerous other civil society organizations**. These dialogues substantially fortified the SLMA's institutional capacity for impactful



health policy formulation and evidence-based advocacy.

Academic Rigour and Milestones

The academic dimensions of the congress achieved unprecedented metrics. The Abstract Review Committee processed a record **465 submitted abstracts**, representing the highest volume ever documented in the historical annals of the SLMA Congress.

Furthermore, the Oration Committee rigorously evaluated 17 competitive submissions to designate the scholarly works meriting the presentation of prestigious orations, thereby preserving the association's time-honored tradition of original clinical research. Prior to the formal commencement, **10 pre-congress workshops** were successfully conducted with active participation of medical professionals across the country.

Comprehensive Scientific Programme

The overarching four-day scientific agenda spanned the breadth of modern medical science, incorporating specialized discourse across endocrinology, cardiology, rheumatology, dermatology, surgical disciplines, respiratory medicine, neurology,

oncology, paediatrics, genomics, women's and men's health, pharmaceutical regulations, clinical audits and research ethics and publications.

The core programme comprised the following distribution of academic sessions:

- **28 Symposia:** Comprehensive explorations of evolving paradigms in specialized care.
- **8 Guest Lectures:** Delivered by eminent international and national key opinion leaders.
- **6 Workshops:** Focused on specialized, experiential clinical proficiencies.
- **4 Orations:** Showcasing hallmark original investigative research.
- **3 Plenary Sessions:** Addressing macro-level transformations in global healthcare delivery, disaster resilience and inclusive healthcare.
- **1 Panel Discussion:** Examining complex multi-disciplinary clinical dilemmas.
- **Policy Forum:** Interactive sessions, policy dialogues, targeted workshops and discussions spanning over two days in parallel with academic programme.

Specialized Thematic Focus

The inaugural day of the congress was designated as a dedicated thematic focus on **diabetes mellitus**, highlighting emerging therapeutic modalities, technological innovations, and advanced complication mitigation strategies. The scientific program was complemented by traditional intellectual and cultural engagements, including the annual SLMA Quiz, the SLMA Debate and a medical photography exhibition. The doctors Concert on the final day provided a fitting finale coupled with music and dance by our talented membership.

The SLMA concludes this historic congress with a renewed dedication to nurturing the professional networks established during the sessions, urging the medical community to persistently leverage global and local partnerships in the pursuit of wellness for the nation. It also remains steadfast in its commitment to translating the strategic insights and academic milestones of this congress into actionable, measurable public health outcomes for the nation.

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Dr S Ramachandran Memorial Oration - Prof. R.M.M.K. Namal Rathnayaka



Dr S C Paul Memorial Oration - Professor Kapila Jayaratne



FROM SURVIVAL TO WELLNESS: REFRAMING MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH IN SRI LANKA AMIDST DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION, RISING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Professor Kapila Jayaratne

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Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo



Based on the Dr S C Paul Oration delivered at the Annual Congress of the Sri Lanka Medical Association, 2026

Background

Sri Lanka has achieved remarkable progress in maternal and child health through sustained investment in public health, universal access to services, a strong Public Health Midwife network and near-universal institutional delivery. The maternal mortality ratio has declined to approximately 25 per 100,000 live births. However, the country is now undergoing interconnected demographic, epidemiological, nutritional and technological transitions that are fundamentally changing the health needs of women and children.

The Census of Population and Housing 2024 recorded a population of 21.8 million, of whom 18% were aged 60 years or above, compared with 20.7% in the child population. The median age had risen to 35 years, while the total fertility rate had fallen to 1.3 children per woman.[1] These findings portray an ageing society with rapidly declining fertility, delayed family formation and a shrinking number of births. At the same time, non-communicable diseases, obesity and digitalisation increasingly influence health throughout the life course. This transition also has important implications for population replacement, the future workforce and the sustainability of health and social care systems.

Obstetric transition

The obstetric transition model describes the gradual shift from high maternal mortality, dominated by direct obstetric causes and limited access to care, towards low mortality, a greater contribution from indirect causes, older maternal age, institutionalised maternity care and eventual over-medicalisation.[2] Sri Lanka, with low maternal mortality and almost universal hospital delivery, has reached Stage IV of this transition. The

principal challenge is therefore not progression to another stage, but transformation within an advanced stage.

The national maternal and child health programme continues to demonstrate exceptional reach. In 2023, 284,008 pregnant women were registered, more than 80% before eight weeks of gestation; antenatal care coverage was 95.4%, and 99.9% of deliveries occurred in hospitals. [3] Nevertheless, the number of births declined from 319,010 in 2019 to 214,570 in 2025. In a low-fertility setting, every pregnancy



assumes greater demographic, social and health significance, and its intentionality, preparedness and outcome become increasingly important.

A Sri Lankan study of pregnancy intention found that 17.2% of pregnancies were unplanned and a further 12.7% were ambivalent. [4] These pregnancies were associated with psychosocial vulnerabilities, including gender-based violence, low mood, poor partner relationships and inadequate preparation for pregnancy. Contraceptive knowledge alone is therefore insufficient. Reproductive choice should be supported through person-centred services that integrate preconception care, mental wellbeing, healthy relationships and social support.

The low-fertility-high-risk pregnancy paradox

Declining fertility does not necessarily produce a corresponding decline in maternal risk. Instead, risk is becoming concentrated within fewer and increasingly complex pregnancies. In 2023, 12.7% of pregnancies occurred among women aged over 35 years, one-third of women were obese at booking, and 38% experienced an antenatal morbidity.[3] Women

increasingly enter pregnancy with obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease or other chronic conditions, while infections remain an important source of morbidity.

Sri Lankan research demonstrates the clinical consequences of this changing profile. Among women who were overweight or obese before pregnancy, 47% developed gestational diabetes, 54% underwent caesarean delivery and 35% experienced postpartum haemorrhage. Among women aged 35 years or above, 41% had a pre-existing chronic medical condition and 53% experienced an antenatal morbidity. Heart disease has also emerged as a leading indirect cause of maternal mortality. Maternal health must consequently be understood as a life-course and intergenerational issue rather than an isolated obstetric episode.

Mortality indicators capture only a small proportion of the true burden. Maternal near misses and non-fatal morbidity require systematic measurement, together with their cumulative effects across the reproductive lifespan.[5] Greater attention is required to disability, recovery, mental health, social wellbeing and the future risk of non-communicable disease. This

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The Census of Population and Housing 2024 recorded a population of 21.8 million, of whom 18% were aged 60 years or above, compared with 20.7% in the child population. The median age had risen to 35 years, while the total fertility rate had fallen to 1.3 children per woman.[1] These findings portray an ageing society with rapidly declining fertility, delayed family formation and a shrinking number of births.

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represents a necessary shift beyond maternal survival towards maternal wellness.

A Sri Lanka-specific Obstetric Transition Model

Sri Lanka is entering a distinct phase of Obstetric Transition. It is characterised by four interacting dynamics: declining fertility, increasing maternal morbidity, health-system medicalisation, and digitally enabled and artificial intelligence-supported healthcare. Addressing these dynamics requires a multidisciplinary model linking obstetrics and public health with internal medicine, cardiology, endocrinology, anaesthesiology, microbiology, pulmonology, psychiatry and primary care.

Digital health offers important opportunities to strengthen surveillance, risk prediction, continuity of care and health-system decision-making. The ongoing AI-powered population-based birth cohort in the Western Province integrates an electronic health record with the Maathru mobile application and seeks to predict postpartum haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia, preterm birth and neonatal morbidity.[6] This initiative aims to support a transition from reactive treatment to predictive, preventive and personalised care.

Such innovation must be accompanied by interoperable information systems, a digitally capable workforce, strong governance, privacy protection and equitable access. Predictive tools should be evaluated for

accuracy, fairness and usefulness in the Sri Lankan context, particularly among women with limited digital access. Technology should strengthen, rather than replace, clinical judgement, community engagement and humane relationships.

The way forward

Sri Lanka's next maternal and child health frontier must be centred on wellness. Preconception services should actively address nutrition, healthy weight, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular risk, mental health and social vulnerability. Postpartum care should extend beyond the traditional period and connect women with continuing primary and specialist care. Surveillance systems should measure severe morbidity and

near misses alongside mortality and translate evidence into quality improvement.

The country must protect its historic achievements while adapting services to fewer but more complex pregnancies. Strong partnerships, better measurement, integrated non-communicable disease care, respectful maternity care and ethical use of digital intelligence will be essential. The ultimate objective is to enable women to enter pregnancy healthier, experience safe and dignified care, and emerge with better long-term health and wellbeing—ensuring compassionate, future-ready care for every woman, every pregnancy and every baby.

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COMMITMENT TOWARDS A NATIONAL WELLBEING PLAN: THE POLICY FORUM AND THE WAY FORWARD

Dr Susie Perera, Dr Aruni Malwatta, Dr Lahiru Kodituwakku, Dr Asiri Hewamalage, Professor Saroj Jayasinghe

Sri Lanka Medical Association

The Policy Forum of the 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress of the SLMA, held on 22nd and 24th July, featured several policy-informed dialogues of national significance. These were preceded by pre-congress activities involving various partners and professional colleges working with the SLMA. Together, these efforts contributed to a shared understanding and commitment to developing a National Wellbeing Plan, which is in line with the SLMA Presidential Theme for 2026, "Wellness in the nation through local and global partnerships".

During the preparatory phase advocacy briefs pertaining to the different dialogues were shared to generate interest; The Mind Menu, an integral part of an interconnected plan for wellbeing, Shri Chi Complementing a life course activity wellbeing, Plate for Change – the nutritional Wellbeing, The Partnership Forum for Wellbeing- building partnerships for a wellbeing-oriented nation, An Agenda for National Fitness- For All by All. Further, a comprehensive concept paper was developed on integration of health governance components into national climate and disaster risk management frameworks. A brainstorming session on mainstreaming clinical audits in the state sector hospitals, through adaptation of a contextualized guideline was

also held as a prelude to the plenary discussion on the same at the main congress. Preparatory planning also included a stakeholder mapping on delivering inclusive healthcare for people with disabilities and a pre-congress session on children, adolescent and young mental health, focusing on important areas of public health concerns.

All these preparatory works led to formulation of a comprehensive Policy Forum, spanning over two days, for the main medical congress comprising of following sessions and workshops,

- Strengthening Child and Adolescent Mental Wellbeing through Responsive Parenting and Digital Citizenship
- The Mind Menu, an integral part of an interconnected plan for wellbeing
- Shri Chi; Complementing a life course wellbeing
- "Plate for Change", No By-pass for Wellbeing
- The Partnership Forum for Wellbeing- building partnerships for a wellbeing-oriented nation, An Agenda for National Fitness- For All by All.
- Strengthening Sri Lanka's Health System Preparedness, Response and Recovery

for Complex Disasters and Climate Impacts

- The Pivotal Role of Clinical Audits in Health Governance; Mainstreaming and Benchmarking Clinical Audits in Sri Lanka
- Building an Inclusive Health Future in Sri Lanka for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

At the closing ceremony, the organizers presented a declaration proposing collective action by the SLMA through partnerships. Please refer to the declaration in the box below.

An action plan for immediate post-congress activities has already been presented. The interest generated through the partnership forums and among several professional colleges should now be carried forward. The wellbeing-related tools discussed during the forums require further technical deliberation, as outlined in the post-congress action plan. The proposed National Wellbeing Plan also needs further discussion with the Ministry of Health to elevate it to a national agenda. Preliminary pre-congress discussions with the Hon. Deputy Minister of Health were supportive of this idea. A high-profile national awareness initiative could be

launched through a National Walk organized by the SLMA in support of the Wellbeing Plan, bringing together forum partners and others who wish to join this national endeavour.

The rich discussion at the Clinical Audit plenary session and subsequent publication of the clinical audit report on high-cost medications in selected state sector hospitals, led to an appointment of three-member expert panel by the Ministry of Health, under the instructions of the Hon. Minister of Health, to study the report and propose pathway for relevant guideline development on the same. Additionally, a Policy Brief will be published soon, based on the discussions at the plenary on disaster resilience amidst complex and climate related disasters which would establish several inter agency technical collaborations.

All these endeavors were a result of a dedicated team effort, powered by like-minded and committed partners. The organizers wish to acknowledge all the individuals, representatives of professional colleges, stakeholders and partners both local and international who contributed to the success of this policy forum and follow up action.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE POLICY FORUM

The Pivotal Role of Clinical Audits in Health Governance: Mainstreaming and Benchmarking Clinical Audits in Sri Lanka



The Pivotal Role of Clinical Audits in Health Governance: Mainstreaming and Benchmarking Clinical Audits in Sri Lanka



The Pivotal Role of Clinical Audits in Health Governance: Mainstreaming and Benchmarking Clinical Audits in Sri Lanka

Initiating The SLMA Partnership Forum for Well-Being



Strengthening Sri Lanka's Health System Preparedness, Response and Recovery for Complex Disasters and Climate Impacts



Strengthening Sri Lanka's Health System Preparedness, Response and Recovery for Complex Disasters and Climate Impacts



Strengthening Sri Lanka's Health System Preparedness, Response and Recovery for Complex Disasters and Climate Impacts



Plate for Change: A Multi Stakeholder Path



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE POLICY FORUM

Wellness Policy Forum: The Mind Menu



Wellness Policy Forum: The Mind Menu



Shri Chi Complementing a Life Course for Wellbeing



Building an Inclusive Health Future in Sri Lanka for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities



Building an Inclusive Health Future in Sri Lanka for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities



Building an Inclusive Health Future in Sri Lanka for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT THE 139TH ANNIVERSARY INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS

Dr Isshani Fernando

Hon. Secretary, Sri Lanka Medical Association



The 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress of the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) highlighted vital international collaborations and partnerships under its core focus on global health synergy. A cornerstone of the event was the strategic alliance with the International Diabetes Federation – South-East Asia Region (IDF-SEA) to tackle regional metabolic disease burdens, alongside joint inclusive healthcare initiatives hosted alongside Special Olympics Asia Pacific addressing care for persons with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, development cooperation was deeply reinforced through active

engagement with the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office Sri Lanka—focusing on Digital Citizenship and Mental Health—and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office Sri Lanka, linking sustainable development directly with disaster risk management in the health sector and health governance through mainstreaming clinical audits.

The global stature of the congress was further elevated by a diverse, multi-regional presence of distinguished international faculty and delegates who shared cutting-edge research, clinical insights, and policy frameworks.

Experts and medical pioneers converged from across South Asia and South East Asia to discuss region wide health concerns and potential innovations adaptable in a Sri Lanka context, while academic and clinical leaders from the UK, the USA, and South Africa contributed high-level perspectives on advancements in clinical medicine, inclusive health, health security, and technological innovation.

Furthermore, we must acknowledge the exceptional array of local and international collaborations forged notably through our sister professional colleges, that culminated in 10

successful pre-congress sessions and 3 insightful post-congress sessions, underscoring our enduring engagement with both the domestic medical fraternity and the broader global scientific community.

Together, these robust cross-border and inter-agency partnerships reaffirmed the critical importance of global cooperation in shaping a sustainable and equitable future for healthcare delivery. Above all these valued collaborations reaffirm SLMA's continued commitment to "Wellness in the nation through global and local collaborations".

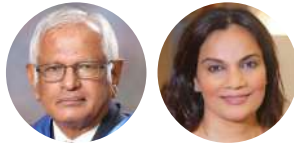


COLLABORATIVE SESSION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DIABETES FEDERATION SOUTHEAST ASIA REGION (IDF-SEA)



THE HUMAN TOUCH VS. THE ALGORITHM: SLMA DEBATES AI IN HEALTHCARE

**Dr Sarath Gamini De Silva and
Dr Santhushya Fernando**



As is customary, the SLMA 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress had the debate, most looked forward to event, on the 11th Saturday of July, 2026.

The topic was one of the most important issues in medical practice today.

"Artificial Intelligence Does More Harm than Benefit to Clinical Practice"

This was proposed by a team consisting of Dr Santhushya Fernando (leader), Prof. Murali Vallipurathan and Dr Manudi Vidanapathirana .

It was opposed by Dr Ajith Amarasinghe (leader). Dr Harsha Jayakody and Dr Ajay Jayaseelan, arguing that AI was beneficial to clinical practice .

About 100 members watched the debate with much interest. Before the debate the show of hands indicated that a small majority thought Artificial Intelligence was beneficial to clinical practice. However, after the debate, the majority favoured the proponents' view that it was likely to be more harmful.

The proposition raised the following main arguments: AI has a dehumanising effect on the

most human of all professions; medicine is not just a science it's an art and the art is lost in the algorithms of AI; AI is not a mere tool, rather an agent that will manipulate thinking and action to suit the agenda of the AI industry that creates AI tools; AI use compromises patient safety by indiscreet sharing of patient data and take away the accountability and confidentiality from the health care system.

The opposition countered the stance of the proposition with the following arguments: AI is an enhancer and a tool and not a replacement of the doctor; the future doctor will not be

replaced by AI, rather, doctors who don't use AI will be replaced by those who do; the doctor will be responsible for AI assisted decision making, and not AI per se; AI does not fatigue and therefore can be used to reduce the workload, triage and reduce physician burnout.

At the end of passionate arguments from both side, the chairpersons called for a "mind change vote".

The debators were thanked for their sharing of their sides of the arguments.



A PHOTO MOSAIC FROM THE SLMA QUIZ AND POLICY FORUM

SLMA Quiz



Digital Citizenship and Child Mental Health: A Policy Agenda for Sri Lanka



MEDICINE IN FOCUS: PHOTOS FROM THE CMJ SESSION



BEYOND THE WHITE COAT: SLMA DOCTORS' CONCERT 2026

Dr Nilanka Anjalee Wickramasinghe
Social Secretary, SLMA



The medical profession is most often associated with clinics, wards, operating theatres, laboratories and lecture halls. Yet behind the white coats are musicians, singers, dancers and performers whose talents extend far beyond the practice of medicine. The "SLMA Doctors' Concert 2026" once again brought this remarkable artistic side of the profession into the spotlight.

Organised by the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA), this year's concert was held on 25 July 2026 at The Forum, Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams, Colombo. From 7.00 pm onwards, the venue came alive with music, dance and fellowship as doctors, their families, colleagues and friends gathered for an evening devoted not to medicine, but to the performing arts.

The Doctors' Concert has been a much-loved tradition of the SLMA for many years, providing a stage on which members of the profession can exchange the pressures and responsibilities of medical life for microphones, musical instruments and dancing shoes. The 2026 edition continued that tradition with a diverse programme encompassing Sinhala and English favourites, Hindi music, traditional dance, duets, instrumental accompaniment, a

lively band performance and audience participation.

A special feature of this year's concert was the wider involvement of the professional medical bodies of Sri Lanka. Invitations were extended to all the colleges, encouraging them to nominate some of their best performers to represent their respective professional communities on the Doctors' Concert stage. Their participation added a new dimension to the evening and brought together talented doctors from across specialties and institutions as part of the concert line-up. It also reinforced the spirit of fellowship that lies at the heart of the event—reminding us that, irrespective of specialty or workplace, the arts have a unique ability to bring the medical profession together.

The programme showcased an impressive range of talent. Dr Manella Joseph opened the musical performances with her original song Ambalame Pina, followed by performances from Dr Uditha Kodithuwakku, Dr Sameera Madugalle, Dr Randika Wijerathne, Dr Vishaka Kaluarachchi, Dr Nalinda Herath, Dr Ayesha Samankula, Dr Rahal Fernando, Dr Jaliya Jayasekera and Dr Sanjeevani Rupasinghe.

Sri Lankan traditional dance was brought to the stage by Dr Akhila Nilaweera and Dr Gihani

Jayaweera, adding colour and movement to the musical programme.

The latter half of the evening moved seamlessly across musical genres. A band headed by Dr Christo Fernando, together with Ray, Tony and Dr Farzad, entertained the audience with a lively Trini Lopez medley. Dr Gananath Dissanayaka performed the timeless What a Wonderful World, while Prof. Isha Prematilleke and Dr Harith Wijeratne presented Shallow. Drs Sankha and Nirodha Randenikumara joined forces for Islands in the Stream, Savinki Rambodagalla performed Amy Winehouse's Valerie, and Dr Nilanka Wickramasinghe presented When You Tell Me That You Love Me.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the Doctors' Concert has always been its ability to turn the audience from spectators into participants. This year was no exception. A spirited sing-along session led by Dr Pramodh, with Dr Mathisha on drums, brought together a collection of much-loved Sinhala favourites including songs by Clarence Wijewardena. The musical programme then gave way to a dance session, allowing the celebratory atmosphere to continue.

The evening concluded on a fitting note with the SLMA Council

joining together for "yanna rata wate", symbolising friendship, shared memories and the love for our mother land Sri Lanka.

The concert was coordinated through the collective efforts of the SLMA team, with Dr Christo Fernando, Council Member and a former Social Secretary of the SLMA, and Social Secretaries Dr Pramilla Senanayake and Dr Nilanka Wickramasinghe working towards bringing together the performers and producing the evening's programme.

More than simply an entertainment event, the Doctors' Concert remains an important celebration of the people behind the profession. Medicine demands dedication, precision and resilience, but doctors are also individuals with passions, creativity and talents that deserve expression. An evening such as this provides an opportunity to reconnect as colleagues and friends, to enjoy the talents of one another and, for a few hours, to leave the world of medicine behind.

The SLMA Doctors' Concert 2026 was thus not merely a series of performances. It was a celebration of camaraderie, creativity and the remarkable versatility of Sri Lanka's medical community—and another memorable chapter in one of the SLMA's most cherished traditions.





SLMA PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION 2026: CAPTURING MEDICINE AND BEYOND

Dr Murali Vallipuranathan

Chair, Photographic Committee, Sri Lanka Medical Association
139th Anniversary International Medical Congress 2026



As Chair of the Photographic Committee of the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA), it is my distinct privilege to present the successful conclusion of the SLMA Photography Competition and Exhibition at the 139th Anniversary International Medical Congress 2026, held from 22nd to 25th July 2026 at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams, Colombo. This event marks the second year of our competitive exhibition, successfully building upon the foundation established during our inaugural 2024 event. Through this initiative, the SLMA directly reflects the growing international trend of increasing utilization of photography within medicine, highlighting its value both as a critical clinical instrument and a profound creative outlet for healthcare professionals.

Beyond its technical applications in medical diagnostics, surgical documentation, and public health education, visual art provides medical professionals with a therapeutic medium. Practicing medicine is an immensely demanding discipline; engaging with photography allows doctors to cultivate mindfulness, sharpen observation skills, and foster emotional well-being amidst the realities of clinical practice. The annual competition bridges the art of visual imagery with the science of healing, celebrating the creative capabilities of our medical fraternity.

Four Award Categories and Exhibition Highlights

This year's competition featured four diverse award categories designed to showcase the artistic versatility of our community:

- 1. Animals & Plants:** Macro photography, wildlife dynamics, botanical artistry, and natural biodiversity.
- 2. Scenery (Landscape/ Seascape):** Scenic landscapes, marine horizons, weather dynamics, and environmental splendor.
- 3. Health and Medicine:** Photographs depicting public health initiatives, clinical medicine, medical education, and historical medical landmarks.

- 4. Mobile Phone Photography:** Spontaneous visual storytelling captured exclusively through mobile device sensors across any core category.

From a large pool of competitive entries submitted by medical institutions across Sri Lanka, a meticulous selection process was conducted to identify the top 100 photographs. These top photographs were proudly displayed in a dedicated gallery at the congress venue throughout the event, captivating delegates and guests while showcasing the narrative power of visual art in medicine.

The Behind-the-Scenes Role of the Distinguished Panel of Judges

The fairness and prestige of the competition were upheld through the commitment of our distinguished panel of judges. Working diligently behind the scenes, the panel spent numerous hours evaluating each submission based on strict criteria, including technical execution, lighting, composition, creative perspective, emotional resonance, and thematic adherence.

Category	Placement	Winner Name
Mobile Category	1 st Place	Prof. Mohan de Silva
	2 nd Place	Yalini Thivaharan
	3 rd Place	Hasitha Sandaruwan Kaluarachchi
Scenery (Landscape/ Seascape)	1 st Place	Dr. Sidath Aloka Parakramawansa
	2 nd Place	Dr. D. M. Attanayake
Animals and Plants	1 st Place	Dr. Sivasuganthan Kanesu
	2 nd Place	Dr. Sivasuganthan Kanesu
	3 rd Place	Dr. Sidath Aloka Parakramawansa

The panel applied unwavering standards of excellence across all categories. Notably, while general categories received entries of exceptional caliber, the judges maintained an uncompromising benchmark for clinical and health-related imagery. Following detailed evaluation, the judging panel concluded that no entries in the Health and Medicine category met the required standard for an award this year. Consequently, no prizes were awarded in that category for 2026—a decision reflecting our commitment to maintaining the highest standard of artistic and technical merit, ensuring that SLMA competition awards remain a hallmark of true excellence.

Prizes and Official Announcement of Winners

To recognize outstanding talent, attractive prizes were awarded in the winning categories. Cash prizes for the competition were generously supported by **Metropolitan**. First-place winners

in each winning category received a cash prize of **Rs. 10,000** along with a memento token framed photograph kindly gifted by **Mr. Clifford Murray of Minal Studio, Negombo**. Second-place winners received a cash prize of **Rs. 3,000**, while third-place entries were recognized with formal certificates of merit. Furthermore, in appreciation of their artistic contribution and active engagement, all competition participants are entitled to receive an official participation certificate.

The SLMA Photographic Committee warmly congratulates all prize winners and commended participants:

Acknowledgments and Future Outlook

The success of the 139th Anniversary Congress Photography Exhibition highlights the vital place art holds alongside medical science. On behalf of the Photographic Committee, I express my deepest appreciation to the President and Council of the SLMA, our esteemed panel of judges, Metropolitan for supporting cash prizes, Mr. Clifford Murray of Minal Studio, Negombo for providing memento framed photographs, the congress organizing team, and all participants. As we celebrate these accomplishments, we look forward to expanding this platform in the years ahead, inspiring medical professionals to continue capturing medicine and beyond.



CAPTURED MOMENTS

SLMA Photography Competition and Exhibition



Workshop on Big Industries and Big Health Problems



Workshop on Strengthening the Clinical Trials Ecosystem in Sri Lanka



DAY ONE PHOTOMONTAGE



DAY ONE PHOTOMONTAGE



DAY ONE PHOTOMONTAGE



DAY TWO THROUGH THE LENSES



DAY TWO THROUGH THE LENSES



DAY THREE IN ACTION



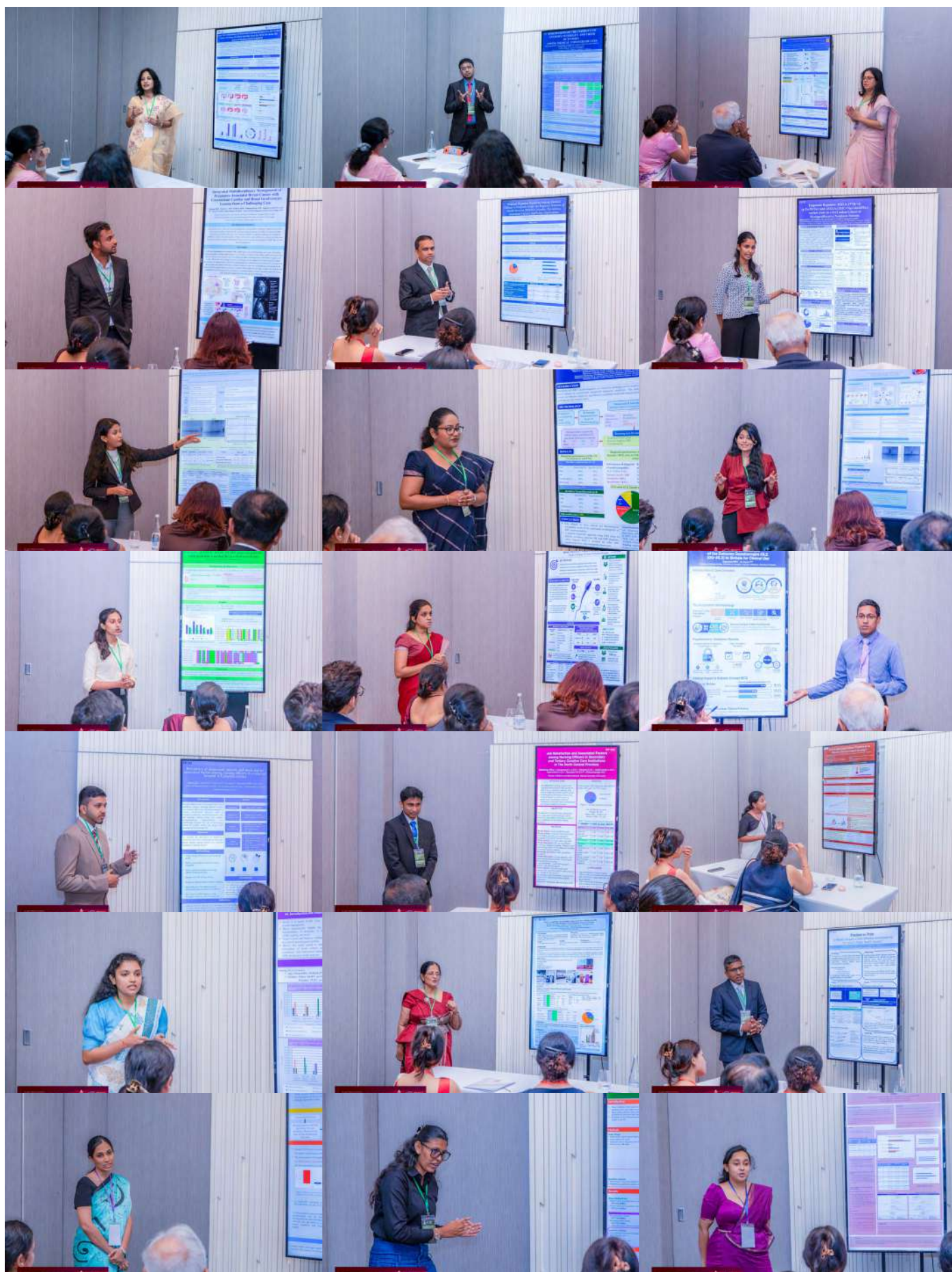
DAY THREE IN ACTION



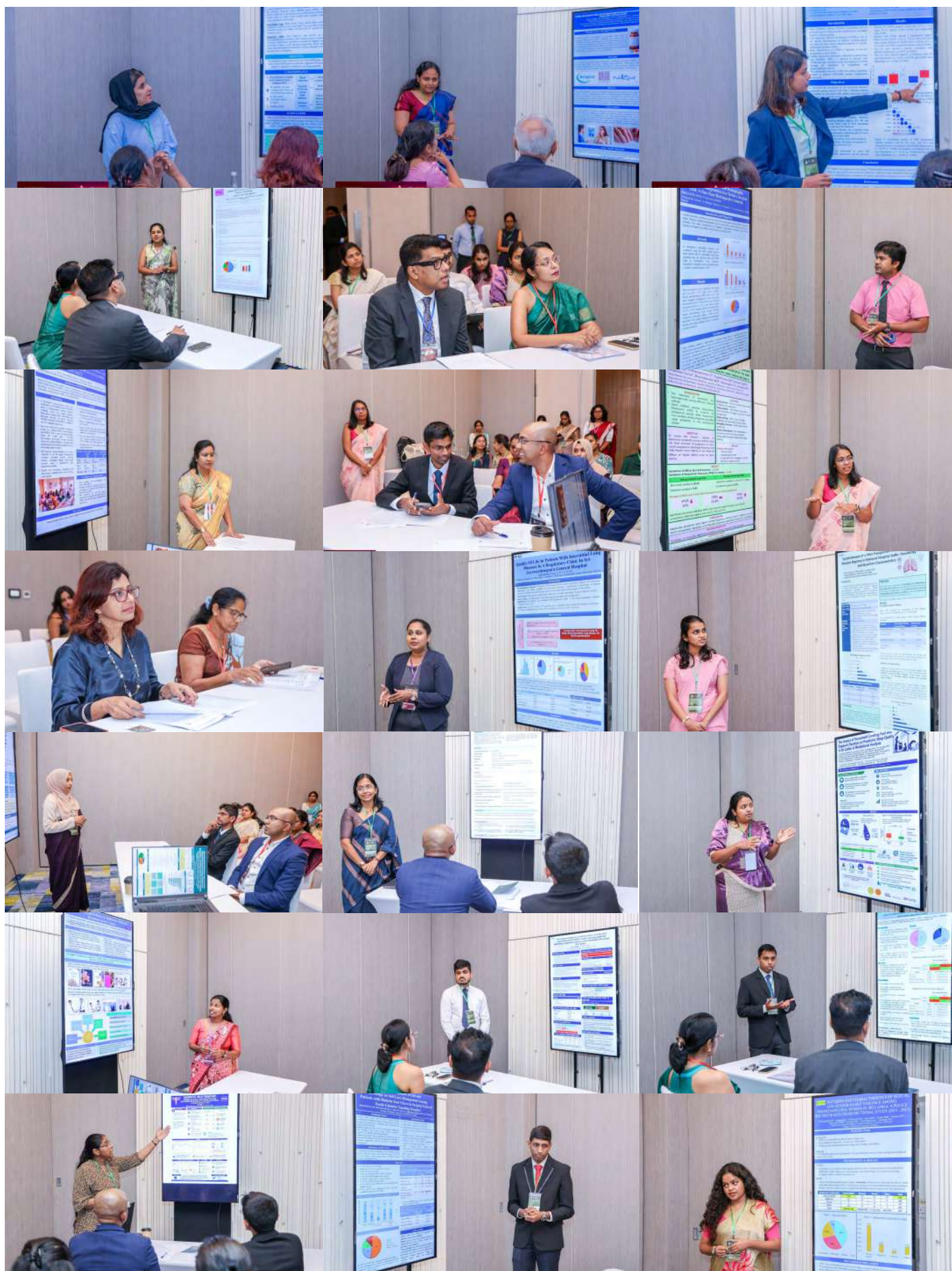
CAPTURED MOMENTS FROM DAY 04 AND POSTER/ORAL PRESENTATIONS



CAPTURED MOMENTS FROM POSTER/ORAL PRESENTATIONS



CAPTURED MOMENTS FROM POSTER/ORAL PRESENTATIONS



A MEMORABLE FINALE: CLOSING CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS





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