

Colombo Medical Congress 2020

Ranil Jayawardena¹, Santushi Amarasuriya¹, Prasad Katulanda¹, Saroj Jayasinghe¹¹University of Colombo

The Colombo Medical Congress 2020 was held from 12-15 February 2020 as part of the 150-year anniversary celebrations of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. The theme of the congress was Medicine in Sri Lanka: The Legacy and the Future. In view of the historic nature of the event, it was planned to involve as many areas in the field of medicine and as many alumni and research collaborators as possible. The Faculty partnered with the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association (CoMSAA) to organize this event.

This supplement of the Ceylon Journal of Medical Science carries the abstracts of the scientific sessions approved by the scientific committee. A wide range of topics across almost all disciplines have been selected, ranging from clinical topics to genomics to nutrition to gender-based violence to medical humanities. There were 69 oral papers and 171 poster presentations, and these were held in the premises of the historic ‘Block’ i.e. the Anatomy Department’s dissection rooms and lecture halls. The next few paragraphs outline the context of these scientific sessions held during the congress.


The preparations for the Colombo Medical Congress began in late 2018. From the outset it was aimed at being inclusive, to collaborate and link the wide network of alumni with the current and future graduates and develop closer and stronger ties across generations.

The congress was inaugurated on the 12th of February and had a special recorded video message from the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. He described the contributions made by our faculty in relation to global health and medical education. It was a historic occasion to have a Secretary General of the WHO speaking at a Sri Lankan medical conference organized by a university. The chief guest was Professor Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, a distinguished alumnus, and the keynote speaker was Kamini Mendis, Professor Emeritus of Parasitology.

Author responsible for correspondence:

Saroj Jayasinghe

Co-chair of the organizing committee of the Colombo Medical Congress 2020
Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
Email: saroj@clinmed.cmb.ac.lk

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1460-6073>

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.4038/cjms.v56i2.4973>



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

The anniversary publication, “Colombo Medical School at 150: Celebrating our Heritage” was launched and several distinguished academics were felicitated. A total of about 900 participated at the inauguration ceremony.

The congress, held in the faculty premises, was one of the largest medical gatherings in the country in recent times. A total of 302 lectures were delivered in 6 parallel sessions and 9 congress workshops were also conducted. There were 49 overseas speakers. Participants included 553 paid registrants, 495 student registrants and 430 workshop registrants. There were two panel discussions, a Grand Plenary that explored ‘Visions for the Future’ and another on ‘Engaging with Alumni’. Proposals discussed and recommended included the establishment of a dedicated research fund, a center for postgraduate research and a foundation to mobilize resources. Several retired professors and teachers were also felicitated during the sessions.

The first Colombo Medical Quiz titled “The University of Colombo Global Medical Challenge” was held with the participation of several universities from Sri Lanka and overseas, and our faculty was placed first. The accompanying social programme included alumni meetings, history walks to cover the heritage buildings in and around the faculty and neighbouring National Hospital of Sri Lanka, music recitals by students and a well-attended music concert (“Peduru Party”) in the refurbished faculty quadrangle. The Colombo Medical Banquet organized by CoMSAA was held on the 15th of February at the Cinnamon Lakeside, where close to 300 guests participated.

Immediately after the congress, the country had to face a COVID-19 epidemic. Due to its effects on travel and the global economy, all indicators point to a new model for future congresses with more on-line lectures and virtual meetings. In other words, this may turn out to be one of the last congresses of this nature for several years. However, we are pleased to note that the Colombo Medical Congress 2020 has laid the foundation towards plans to conduct the Colombo Medical Congress as an annual academic event in collaboration with CoMSAA.