

CoMSAA Australia Medical Symposium 2023 &

Fellowship Dinner

Saturday, 11 NOV 2023 | InterContinental Adelaide



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Dr Prabhath Wagarachchi
President
CoMSAA Australia

It is a great privilege and honour to welcome you all to the second CoMSAA Australia Medical Symposium and Fellowship dinner. As the President of the Colombo Medical School Alumni Association, this gathering represents not just a reunion of old friends and colleagues, but a celebration of the profound impact our alumni have made both in Sri Lanka and overseas the field of medicine.

The main theme of this year's event is to raise funds to help Colombo medical students who are in financial difficulty. I urge each of you to consider donating to our scholarship program. By contributing, you directly enable the dreams and aspirations of future healthcare leaders. Your generosity can alleviate the financial burdens of medical education and open doors for deserving students.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, our alumni network will continue to be a pillar of strength. Together, we can exchange ideas, mentor the next generation of medical professionals, regardless of the location of practice.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the organising committee of the CoMSAA Australia for their commitment and dedication.

Thank you for being an essential part of our medical school's legacy. Wishing you a pleasant and memorable night

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Abstract



Dr Nirmala Wijekoon
MBBS (Colombo),
MD (Colombo),
MRCP (UK), FRCP (London), FRCP (Edinburgh), FCCP

What should we know about medication deprescribing

Medication deprescribing is the process of withdrawal of inappropriate medications, under medical supervision with the goal of minimizing polypharmacy and improving patient outcomes. Even though it is more applicable to older adults due to a multitude of reasons, it is a part of good prescribing continuum in any patient. It involves stopping the medicines with potential/existing harm exceeding potential/existing benefit, which are used for an indication that is no longer an issue and those not fitting with the current goals of care. It requires shared decision making and informed consent from the patient and multidisciplinary approach. Existing limited evidence suggests deprescribing is feasible, safe and beneficial. The potential benefits of deprescribing include reduction of adverse effects, reduction of unwanted interactions, reduction of disability, hospitalization and death, improvement in functional status and quality of life, reduction of healthcare cost and simplification of drug regimens. Withdrawal reactions and reappearance of symptoms and signs are the potential harms of deprescribing. Existing evidence supports prescriber-mediated medication review and intervention as the effective approach to deprescribing. The process includes five steps. There are multiple barriers to deprescribing involving the prescriber as well as the patient. Promoting active engagement of patients enhances the process of deprescribing.

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But most importantly, we know it's a duty we share with our fellow medical professionals - our referrers.

Together we can all make a difference.

To this end, we are delighted to support the CoMSSA Symposium and take this opportunity to congratulate the institution and its Australian Alumni.

Congratulations and well done!

Benson radiology

Abstract



Dr Mahesh Rajasuriya
MBBS (Colombo), MD (Psychiatry), FRANZCP

Compassion in dealing with patients and their families in clinical settings

Evidence supports that compassion improves patient care, physician's health, and the cohesion in the treating team. However, defining, worse understanding, compassion is a bit of a puzzle. This is a brief effort using a case vignette to understand compassion so it can be applied in our professional life.

Mahesh Rajasuriya is the Lead Psychiatrist at the Riverland General Hospital, Berri, South Australia serving the Riverland Mallee Coorong LHN. He is a Senior Lecturer, with a special interest in psychotherapy, at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka and the Director of the Centre for Combating Tobacco, University of Colombo. He is currently reading for his PhD in treatments for alcohol use disorder.

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CoMSAA Australia Medical Symposium 2023 &

Fellowship Dinner

Program

5.30 pm
Registration
Champaign will be served in foyer

6.15 pm
Guests invited to sit down

6.30 pm
Scientific session
- Presentation 1 - Dr Nirmala Wijekoon
- Presentation 2 - Dr Mahesh Rajasuriya
- Discussion

7.30 pm
Dance recital by alumni
- Dr Chinthika Rajapakse
- Dr Sarangi Ratnayake

7.45 pm
President's speech

8.00 pm
Banquet dinner

8.45 pm
Best medicine presentation

9.00 pm
Dance floor opens - band ASHRA

11.30 pm
Event conclusion

The Mega Tale of the Mega Batch



The "**Mega Batch**" of Colombo Medical School is a truly unique batch of doctors

Most of the members of the "**Mega Batch**" were born in 1970, the centenary year of the faculty. As medical students we played an active role in the 125th anniversary celebrations of the faculty in 1995. When the faculty celebrated the 150th year in 2020 we had one batchmate as the co-chair of the scientific committee of the Colombo Medical Congress, with many being speakers, while the country's apex medical organization, Sri Lanka Medical Association, was headed by another batchmate. Both were from the same clinical group at the faculty.

Having faced several postponements of the GCE advanced level exam due to unrest within the country we finally sat the exam in December 1989. In spite of all the adverse circumstances the girls and boys got through the exam with such excellent results that the usual cut off mark for Medicine went up by a staggering 12 marks. Please bear in minds that these were the "**good old days**" when a student's aggregate marks were taken into consideration, rather than a Z score.

There were some pleasant offers in store for the most brilliant of the lot. The residential training as research fellows at the Institute of Fundamental Studies was one such offer. In my opinion the biggest project that resulted from the IFS years is the celebrated couple who continue to do the "**Mega Batch**" pride.

Many a student had not prepared for a second attempt; the next exam being held just 4 months after the results of the first attempt being released. The earnest requests by these students and their parents were considered favourably, and the cut off mark was brought down by 10, resulting in a higher than usual intake of medical students. The Colombo Medical School, being the largest establishment had to bear the brunt of the intake, and the "**Mega Batch**" was born!

The batch had some peculiarities. To my knowledge there were no doctors' children among the 250 plus of us. Among the 20 odd Tamil members of the batch from Jaffna there was only one girl, the "**rose among the thorns**". The only lecture theatres that could accommodate us were the "**new anatomy**" and the second-floor lecture theatre of the administrative building. The "**new anatomy**" was later demolished to pave way for the UCFM tower. Our body groups were larger and there was room for those who didn't like to touch the formalin smelling bodies to stay away and see the structures when someone else had completed the dissections.

The traditional "**Block Night**", organized to mark our leaving the Anatomy block, was full of drama from the outset and ended up with a grand event and one batchmate being permanently branded "**mahaththaya**". The clinical years were not easy with more than usual numbers in a clinical group and many clinicians complaining that the clinical exposure received was inadequate. In spite of all the challenges we toiled on and managed to complete our clinical training, thanks to the superb teaching of the consultants at the NHSL, LRH and the two maternity hospitals.

It wasn't all work and no fun. The batch trips, invariably to a place associated with water, were memorable. Hitch parties were a common occurrence, with one batchmate who officiated as the "**uncle of the bride**" is still best known as "**maama**". A story doing the rounds is that his roommate, having forgotten the key at home went to the theatre and asked a nurse to call the medical student named maama.

The batch graduated at the end of 1997 and started internship in July 1998. The longest running trade union action in the history of the GMOA happened during our internship and many of us cut our political teeth during this battle. The post intern period marked the introduction of shift duty at district hospitals. The circumstances led many of us to pursue postgraduate studies, resulting in a mega number of consultants from the "**Mega Batch**". The first board certified consultant from the batch proudly reminded me recently that he achieved this in spite of having flunked all 3 subjects in the second MBBS. We have the mega batch representation in almost all major specialties. The college of Haematologists has had 5 presidents from the mega batch within a period of about 6 years.

The first professor in Medical Education and one of the first Paediatric Neurologists are from the mega batch. Elderly medicine, Palliative care and leprosy are blessed to have members of the mega batch as torch bearers. We have some batchmates going beyond their line of duty to establish better facilities and care for the patients. The "**Aarathy**" centre for children with developmental delay, the Jeyam Wijerathnam memorial cancer institute and the beautiful haven in the Kandy Neurosurgery ward are few such endeavours.

From the early days of our careers there were colleagues leaving for greener pastures. Many of them have done the country and the batch proud. I will not attempt to enumerate the achievements as the list is long and I may miss some important points. Suffice to say that every important medical gathering in Sri Lanka is being graced by at least one overseas speaker from the mega batch.

The first baby of the batch, born during the third year in faculty, is ready to start her postgraduate studies in Medicine now. Many have decided to follow in their parents' footsteps and are training to be doctors either in Sri Lanka or abroad, while some of the kids have chosen completely different careers. The fact that the batch has kids still in primary school is testimony to the fertility of the batchmates.

Having recently completed the 25th year since starting internship the "**Mega Batch**" is still going strong. Our deal colleague, Gangadari Arewatta, who succumbed to a long illness is sadly missed. At 50 plus we are still young at heart in spite of having survived the usual medical challenges of middle age. I hope that many would be there to see the 175th anniversary of the Colombo Medical School being celebrated with much fanfare and to relate the tales of yesteryear to the amusement of the bright-eyed youngsters in the faculty in 2045!



Dr. Indira Kahawita

MBBS (Colombo), MD Dermatology (Colombo), DTM&H (London)
Consultant Dermatologist Anti Leprosy Campaign Sri Lanka
Secretary General, South Asian Association of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology
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BIO

Dr Chinthika Rajapakse

MFC AL 2003 batch of Colombo Medical Faculty

Chinthika finished her undergraduate degree in 2010 and completed her internship at Colombo South Teaching Hospital and worked in Sri Jayawardhanapura General Hospital prior to migrating to Australia in 2012. She worked in Armidale Rural Referral Hospital, Black Town Hospital, Mount Druitt Hospital and Gold Coast University Hospital prior to embarking General practice Journey with AGPT QLD in 2020. She has completed Diploma in child Health, at Westmead Hospital. She became a fellow with RACGP in 2022 and practices at Varsity Lakes, Gold Coast. Her special interests are women's health, child health and management of chronic diseases.

Chinthika lives on the Gold Coast with her husband Chinthana and kids Jayden and Vihari. Her husband Chinthana works in the construction industry. Jayden is in grade 4 and Vihari is in Prep.



Chinthika started her Kandyan dancing when she started her grade 6 at Devi Balika College. She learnt dancing under Ms Anusha Dias and Mrs Karuna at her school. She attended Budawaththa dancing academy until she completed her school years. She participated in many University dancing events including Ninnada, inter-university dance events, Faculty Concert etc.



After migrating to Australia, she has participated in many local dancing events in both Gladstone, QLD and Gold Coast. She is passionate about dancing and loves teaching dancing to kids with her friend Ruwani and the crew of kids have performed well in some of the local events like Avurudu festival, multicultural events and Vesak festival.



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BIO

Dr Sarangi Ratnayake

MFC 95/96 batch of Colombo Medical Faculty

After graduating from university, Sarangi practiced in Kegalle, Sri Jayawardenapura and Ampara hospitals in Sri Lanka and Broomfield hospital in Chelmsford UK. She arrived in Australia in 2011 and began her career in General practice.

Sarangi is a Fellow of RACGP. She lives in Brisbane and is a GP at Medicine on Blackwood Mitchelton. She has a special interest in mental health, women's and chronic non communicable diseases.









She is married to Dhamma who practices as a GP in Lowood and is the mother of two wonderful teenagers; Janudi and Sithula. Janudi has a keen interest in languages and music and is currently in her final year of high school. Sithuala is an enthusiastic basketball player, currently in grade 9.

Sarangi started dancing at age 6 and performed her Arangethram at age of 16 under the guidance of her distinguished guru Dr.Miranda Hemalatha. Sarangi would like to dedicate this dance to honour her beloved teacher who has helped hundreds of children to build their skills and character through dancing!

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Acknowledgements

- We thank all the Colombo alumni for becoming members and taking time off to attend our event.
- Our Premium sponsor is Histopath Diagnostics SA. Without your financial support this event would not have been a reality.
- All the other individuals/companies who provided advertisements for the souvenir.
- Sri Lankan Airlines for proving a return ticket to Colombo for the raffle.
- Luxury Villas Lanka for providing a gift certificate for the raffle.
- We thank Udul Hewage and Ranjalee Liyanasuriya for organizing our medical symposium.
- All the committee members who made time to attend the many Zoom meetings, sometimes at a short notice that went in to planning and organizing this event.
- We thank Charitha Perera and Harshana Gange for organizing the friendly cricket encounter this morning.
- Intercontinental Adelaide staff led by for ensuring smooth functioning of the venue.
- ASHRA for providing music for a great night of entertainment and Madhu Chandratilleke for taking the lead in organizing the band.
- Hall decorators for making the venue look lively for the evening.
- Daham De Silva for being a fantastic Master of Ceremony
- Mithila Wanigathunge from POINT IT & Design Solutions Pty Ltd for designing and printing of the souvenir.

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