

Editorial

The order changeth: A tribute to a superlative editor

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The new year sees a change in the editorial division of the Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health. After many, many years of shouldering the responsibilities of the editorial duties of the Journal, Dr. Stella G. de Silva has graciously stepped down to make way for a new Joint Editor. The phrase that should be used is that “the old order changeth”. However, for us at the College, Stella and the word “old” are certainly and totally incompatible.

She started her work as the editor of the Ceylon Journal of Child Health, Volume 4 in 1967, just 4 years after the inception of the journal. It was then an annual publication and she saw to it that it was published uninterrupted for all these years. Together with the writer, in the year 2000, she successfully managed to change the title of the journal to that of Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health and converted it from an annual to a quarterly publication. During the last 3 years, mainly under her guidance, the journal has gained in stature and is now the principal academic journal of child health in the country. Stella’s work as an editor for the last 36 years, amongst other things, must surely be a world record. To the best of our knowledge, no other person in the world has had the distinction of guiding the destiny of a medical journal for such a long time.

Stella, as she is so affectionately known, is certainly a legend. Firstly and primarily, as a Consultant Paediatrician par excellence, and subsequently, as a superlative editor. Her work as a Consultant Paediatrician is in itself just as fabulous a narrative as her work as an editor. Her work with the children of this country is well known and very well recognized. In fact, she is presently treating the third generation of some families. The photograph on this page depicts the work that she loves most, working with the children of our nation. The modern day computer is reputed to be machine capable of multi-tasking. She managed to fit in the duties as an editor, ever so comprehensively, in between her work with the children of our land.



What is not that well chronicled are her efforts as an editor. Over the years, her dedication to the cause, her scrupulous commitment to excellence and her fastidious insistence on adherence to even minor details, has helped in no small measure, to enrich our journal. She was the editor in 1971, when the writer himself, as a junior house physician, decided to write up and submit the very first paper of his career, to her journal. That audacious venture turned out to be the proverbial baptism by fire. The writer had to cut, chop, amend, revise and manually type the script no less than seven times before it was acceptable to the great lady. Those were the halcyon days before the internet, the medical databases and the word processors. It was hard labour, to say the least. One year later, that paper finally saw the light of day¹. From that time onwards, one has had occasion to publish many an article and the basic principles of scientific writing learnt at the feet of the master has helped in no small measure in these endeavours.

On an even more personal note, I have had the good fortune to be her student, later her colleague and over the last three years, her joint editor. Over the years, I have got accustomed to never being surprised by her brilliant and razor sharp brain. The incisive thinking, a wealth of knowledge and an uncompromising devotion to excellence are the hallmarks that characterized her very long tenure of office. She continued to give of her best to the journal, even long

after she had retired from the rigours of her services to the nation at the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children in Colombo.

The lady has finally decided but could we afford to let go such a wealth of experience? Certainly not. The Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians, whose official journal is the Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health, has decided to honour Dr. Stella de Silva with the honorary title of Editor Emeritus. It is indeed a fitting tribute to the lady who has given of her very

best to the journal, over so many years. It is also a very shrewd way of retaining her valuable services and guidance for the future as well.

References

1. Perera BJC. Christ Siemens Syndrome. *Cey J Child Health* 1972; 7: 49-54.

B J C Perera

Joint Editor