

Felicitation

Dr Grace Barr Kumarakulasinghe MRCP (E), DCH (Lond), LMS (Cey)

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Grace Barr Kumarakulasinghe (nee Sinnathamby) was born on the August 7, 1908, as the seventh child of G.V. and Alice Sinnathamby. She celebrated her 100th birthday on August 7, 2008. Dr. Barr Kumarakulasinghe now lives with her son, Sudhir in Gregory's Road Colombo.

She first attended Wolfendhal Girl's School, moved to Good Shepherd Convent Kotahena and finally to Ladies College where she obtained a first class at the matriculation examination. Her brother, Dr G S Sinnathamby, coaxed her into a career in medicine. She qualified as a doctor, with First Class Honours, from the Medical College, Colombo in 1937.

In 1948, accompanied by her husband, she proceeded to the United Kingdom on a government scholarship. She returned to Ceylon in 1953 after obtaining the DCH (London) and the MRCP (Edinburgh). She was appointed to the Castle Street Maternity Hospital and in 1954 became the Founder Joint Editor of the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, her co-editor being Dr. Siva Chinnathamby.

In 1956 she was appointed to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital, Colombo. She was elected the President of the Ceylon Paediatric Association in 1963. She took a keen interest in developing the premature baby units in De Soysa Maternity Hospital and Castle Street Hospital for Women.

I first met Dr. Grace Barr Kumarakulasinghe when she was Consultant Paediatrician, Lady Ridgeway Hospital. I did my internship under her in 1967 and she retired from Government Service soon after I completed my internship. At that time the present ward 8 was ward 10 and that was where she worked. Dr Mirando was the Consultant Paediatrician, ward 9 and Dr Stella de Silva, the Consultant Paediatrician, ward 8. Dr Sandrasagara, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon, was in ward 7, immediately below us. On the other wing of the Hospital were Professor Priyani Soysa in ward 1, Dr Walpita in ward 2 and Dr A F S Perera in ward 3.

In those days there were only 2 interns in a ward. My co-house officer was Viji Ponnambalam from a senior batch who had started her internship 3 months late. Thus, for the last 3 months of my internship I had to work alone. The paediatric registrar was Dr Jayaratnam who was also a nephew of Dr Barr Kumarakulasinghe. During that time each of the medical units had to look after, in rotation, 3 other units viz. Premature Baby Unit, Diphtheria Ward and Polio Ward. It was a hectic time but I really enjoyed working under Dr Barr Kumarakulasinghe who was very supportive of us. Working alone for 3 months really toughened me up and helped me a lot in later life.

On behalf of all paediatricians in Sri Lanka I salute and felicitate Dr Grace Barr Kumarakulasinghe, who is cognitively well and physically independent, on reaching her 100th birthday, a truly unique achievement.

Dr. G N Lucas