

## Editorial

# The Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians celebrates its Silver Jubilee in 2021

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The Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians (SLCP), the publisher of the Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health, celebrated its Silver Jubilee in June 2021. The 25-year long trek has indeed been a voyage of incomparable class and splendour, right through infancy, adolescence, and now venturing into adulthood.

In the annals of history, the SLCP is the glittering successor to its forerunner, the much-respected Ceylon Paediatric Association (CPA), which had been inaugurated in 1952. The name of the original organisation was changed to the Sri Lanka Paediatric Association (SLPA) in 1972, with the promulgation of the country as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Sometime in early 1995, the Council and the Membership of the SLPA unanimously decided to convert the association into an Academic College. A sub-committee of senior members was appointed to attend to all aspects of the proposed commencement of The SLCP. The finalised Constitution and the Articles of Association were presented to the Council of the SLPA, unanimously accepted, circulated to the membership of SLPA and legally formalised. At the very first Annual General Meeting on 07<sup>th</sup> June 1996, the SLCP was born with Dr. B. J. C. Perera as the Founder President, Dr. D. H. Karunathilaka as the Honorary Secretary and Dr. Jasmine C. Nanayakkara as the Honorary Treasurer. An Executive Council of 17 members was also elected.

The Induction Ceremony of the Founder President of the SLCP took place with all the usual pomp and pageantry on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1996 at the Auditorium of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute. In the Induction Address, the new President outlined a road map for that year with some particularly important issues that needed urgent attention.

The smooth transition of the SLPA to the SLCP took place promptly. The College inherited the rich traditions of the SLPA, its members and the finances. The new constitution took effect immediately and a new mace and a fresh symbol or logo were designed. In that new emblem of the SLCP, portrayed and used in all official documents and events, the silhouette of a child is encircled by twenty-four lotus petals representing round-the-clock care and services provided by the members of

the SLCP towards the welfare of our children. We thought of them only as one of the national treasures of this land. The traditional earthenware pot, the “*pun kalasa*”, on which the main emblem rests, together with sheaves of coconut flowers surrounding it, depicts prosperity and reiterates that children are the precious jewels of this resplendent isle.

The lofty ideals, the charismatic visions and the committed mission of the SLPA were taken over by the College. However, it was essential to venture into new and uncharted territories. From those early days, there are a veritable plethora of activities that the College has been involved in during this journey of 25 years. For the sake of brevity, all those ventures can only be concisely categorised into several broad groups such as: -

- Continuing Professional Development for all members as well as those of Allied Health Sciences.
- Providing advice and advocacy to all stakeholders involved in child healthcare, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health and the Government of Sri Lanka.
- Interactive engagement with international paediatric organisations. The College has developed abiding connections with many international paediatric organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Asia Pacific Pediatric Association (APPA), the International Pediatric Association (IPA) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) of the United Kingdom.
- Facilitating optimal healthcare to the children of our land together with the provision of welfare services and facilities for the membership of the College.

SLCP greeted the new millennium with a change of the name of its official publication, the Ceylon Journal of Child Health, to the Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health and changed it from an annual publication to a vibrant quarterly journal<sup>1</sup>. The Joint Editors at that time were Dr. Stella G. De Silva and

Dr. B. J. C. Perera. In the year 2003, Dr. G. N. Lucas replaced Dr. Stella G. De Silva when she retired. Drs. Lucas and Perera have continued to guide the destiny of the journal as its Joint Editors, right up to the present time. The journal joined the internationally visible electronic portal of Sri Lanka Journals Online (SLJOL) in 2008 providing free full-text access over the World Wide Web<sup>2</sup>. Currently, it is the only journal of child healthcare in Sri Lanka.

When we look back at our 25-year-long history of existence, the SLCP can be ever so proud of the achievements of that august institution. The College has weaved a golden threaded canvas of progress in a relentless quest towards excellence in child healthcare. The much-honoured members of our College have seen to it that no child admitted under them has had to suffer unnecessarily nor lost his or her life without a committed fight undertaken by the Consultant Paediatricians of our country. Around the four corners of this resplendent isle, our members have worked tirelessly to care for the little ones whose care that has been entrusted to them. It is a glowing tribute to all those enthusiastic women and men who have dedicated the vocation of their lives to ensure excellence in child healthcare. The fantastic vital statistics of child health that this island nation now boasts of, is legendary and irrefutable evidence of their commitment to the cause. Those of us who lit that torch of the obligations of our calling a quarter of a century ago have been undeniably pleased to hand it over to the younger generations of Consultant Paediatricians who have indeed been able to surpass even themselves in the way that our College has progressed right through the corridors of time. They have seen to it that our Motherland has now secured a much-celebrated reputation in paediatrics, even extolled internationally, as a country that has achieved so very much in child healthcare with so few available resources. Those 25 years of unparalleled obligation has indeed been a captivating journey of veritable grandeur.

## References

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest

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