

APPRECIATION

Dr Serozsha A S Goonewardena

MBBS (Peradeniya) MS(Col) FRCS (Eng), Dip Urol (Institute of Urology, University of London)

It is with deep sorrow that we remember and celebrate the life of Dr Serozsha A S Goonewardena retired senior consultant urological surgeon, National Hospital of Sri Lanka. He passed away on the 10th of March 2020.

Dr Goonewardena was a pupil of Royal College Colombo. Having entered the University of Peradeniya in 1977 he was awarded the Chalmer's Gold Medal and C.B Dharmasena Gold Medal for Anatomy, and was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship during his third year when he visited the pioneering urologist the late Mr Joe Smith in Oxford, UK. His visit to Oxford inspired him to embark on a career in urology. He passed out with second-class honours at the final MBBS in 1982. Following completion of the Master of surgery (MS) training programme, he embarked in a career in urological surgery under the tutelage of Dr Lakshman Atygalle, consultant urological surgeon. In the UK he trained with Mr NW Harrison in Brighton, UK and achieved the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. He is the first urological surgeon in Sri Lanka to be board certified as a specialist by the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo in August 1991.



Upon his arrival in Sri Lanka, he was appointed as the consultant urological surgeon at Karapitiya Teaching Hospital, Galle. He was appointed to the Colombo General Hospital (the current National Hospital of Sri Lanka) as a consultant urological surgeon in 1993 and retired from this post in 2018 as the most senior urological surgeon in the Ministry of Health.

He was one of the three founders of the Sri Lanka Association of Urological Surgeons (SLAUS) and a council member for many years. He became the President of SLAUS in 2008, and a joint meeting was held with the Royal Society of Medicine during his tenure.

He will be remembered and appreciated for embellishing the surgical sphere with scientific and academic vigour. He was an avid scientific reader, a prolific publisher of scientific papers in national and international journals, and the Editor of the Sri Lanka Journal of Surgery, and the Sri Lanka Journal of Urology for many years. Many urological surgeons, surgical trainees, and medical and allied health students, have benefitted from his incredible mind. He was undoubtedly one of the most academic doctors in this part of the world, and stood shoulder to shoulder with academics of the international community, who respected and admired him. A past president of the British Association of Urological Surgeons mentioned that it is a “very great loss to world and especially Sri Lankan urology. I always felt he was one of the cleverest urologists I had ever met and such a wonderfully modest man”. Even up till a few weeks before his untimely death, he could be found immersed in books at the Sri Lanka Medical Library. Such was his thirst to educate himself and to pass this teaching to others.

He was a kind, caring doctor who respected and gave dignity to patients, immaterial of who they were. Many presidents, prime ministers, and other VIPs have been treated in his wards, but they all received the same treatment, as would any other citizen of our country, whoever they were or wherever they came from.

He looked after his team, very caringly and stood by them through thick and thin – through childbirths, weddings, conflicts with other units, deaths etc... he was even better than a best friend or a family member in this regard.

But one of the most important aspects that he was admired for was his honesty, integrity and values. If he believed that something was right, he would fight tenaciously for that, whatever the personal costs to him. His constant battle to challenge the administration against the practice of keeping prisoner patients in his ward shackled to bed railings, and the demand from the government to ensure hospital beds for each and every patient in wards to eliminate floor patients, are some of the many issues he took up.

With regard to his passion and steadfastness in sticking to his guns, he is someone who is difficult to emulate. At least we could aspire to achieving those admirable qualities.

As a trainee of his, along with many other medical students, consultant surgeons and surgical trainees, friends, colleagues, and patients, we remain greatly indebted to this surgical giant.

He is survived by his wife Sandhya and his two daughters Dilhani and Nadeeshani.

May he attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana.

Ajith Malalasekera

Editor in Chief, Sri Lanka Journal of Surgery
