

### A bibliography of Sri Lankan surgical research

Edited by Channa Ratnatunga

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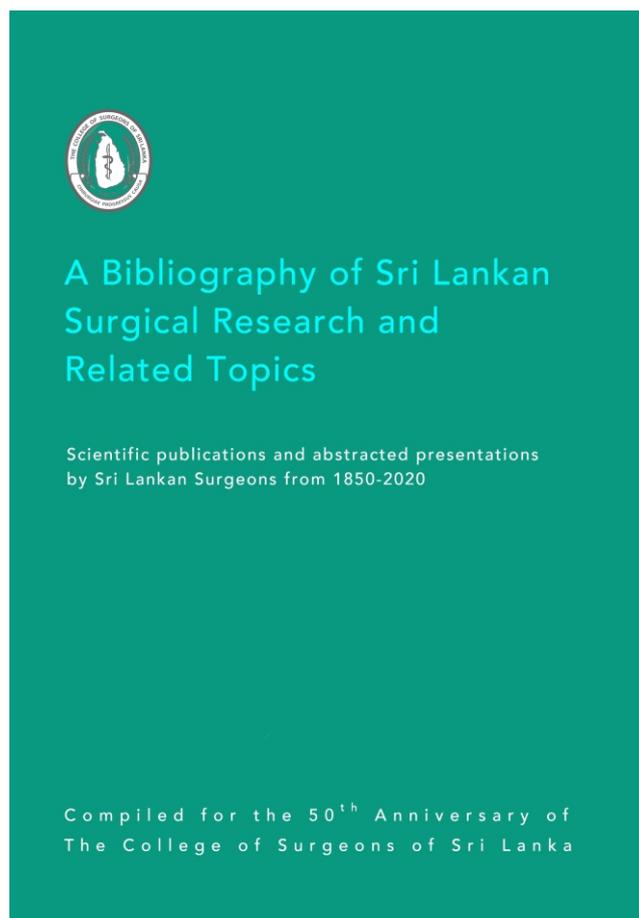
Whenever we want to promote research, we highlight the age-old aphorism '*Publish or Perish*'. However, until recently research was not given its due place in postgraduate medical education of Sri Lanka. Many jokingly said '*Good surgeons operate; bad surgeons do research!*' Fortunately, during the last few years research has become an important component of postgraduate surgical education. Now it is mandatory to conduct research and have publications before becoming eligible for board certification as a specialist surgeon in this country. Sir Isaac Newton said '*If I have been able to see farther than others, it was because I stood on the shoulders of giants*' indicating the importance of the existing knowledge founded by his predecessors. Therefore, it is essential that we read the already done research to plan and conduct better and more advanced research projects rather than repeating the same. Some believe that the advanced knowledge and skills on agriculture, irrigation, architecture and health care we had in ancient Sri Lanka was lost to the future generations as it was not documented and preserved.

It is not difficult to locate research done in the recent past as most articles are available in the internet and can be searched easily. Despite extreme restrictions by certain sources requesting payments, thanks to the hackers and their websites, almost any article that has been published can be accessed free. However, research published a couple of decades ago and beyond are still available only as hard copies in few libraries and searching for their existence is extremely difficult if not impossible.

Professor Channa Ratnatunga (CR) has stepped into fill this void and help us to search old publications by compiling a bibliography of research conducted in Sri Lanka related to surgery and its allied fields. Being a scientific researcher of distinction and a prolific writer of fame himself, CR has done the job with love and care. He has listed every single article written by Sri Lankan surgeons from 1850 to 2021 in any journal and categorised them according to different specialties and sections making search easy. This mammoth task has been completed by CR himself despite his ill health due to a cerebrovascular event sustained few years ago. Professor A. H. Sherifdeen writing a foreword to the book, marvel at the amount of work and research that has gone into this valuable publication.

The book runs into 354 pages of A4 size and the names of authors of each publication is highlighted in bold for easy perusal. The font size of 12 would help even elderly readers with poor vision like me to refer the contents with ease. Ananda Press who had done the printing should be applauded for the elegant finish. Mr Devendra and his team have shown that they are the best in medical publishing in Sri Lanka. The College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka has taken the initiative to publish this work as part of its golden jubilee celebrations. This kind gesture augurs well with the theme for this year and will be a worthwhile investment in relation to their younger members.

CR has taken the extra burden to include the abstracts of presentations done at various scientific fora of this country too. This must have been a herculean task consuming a considerable time and effort. Many of those proceedings and abstract books may not be



easily accessible to researchers and the contents may not have undergone the rigorous peer review which is the hallmark of quality assurance in research. Whether this extra effort is worth in the long-run would be questionable. Being the modest and unassuming man, CR has not even printed his name in the cover page giving the full credit to the publisher- The College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka which he presided in 2003. This shows his clear intentions of compiling this book - not for personal gain but to perpetuate a research culture among blossoming surgeons. In the prologue, CR emphasises his intention of compiling this book – *'It is envisaged that this will help fuel future research into surgical disease in Sri Lanka, and also become a valuable resource for literature reviews of the same'*. Now it is up to the younger surgeons to pay tribute to CR for this tireless project, by conducting better quality research leading to better patient outcomes. Prof Channa Ratnatunga has given you the opportunity to stand on the shoulders of giants to see far! Please grab the opportunity!!

Reviewed by,

Anuruddha Abeygunasekera  
Consultant urological surgeon  
Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka  
amabey@sltnet.lk