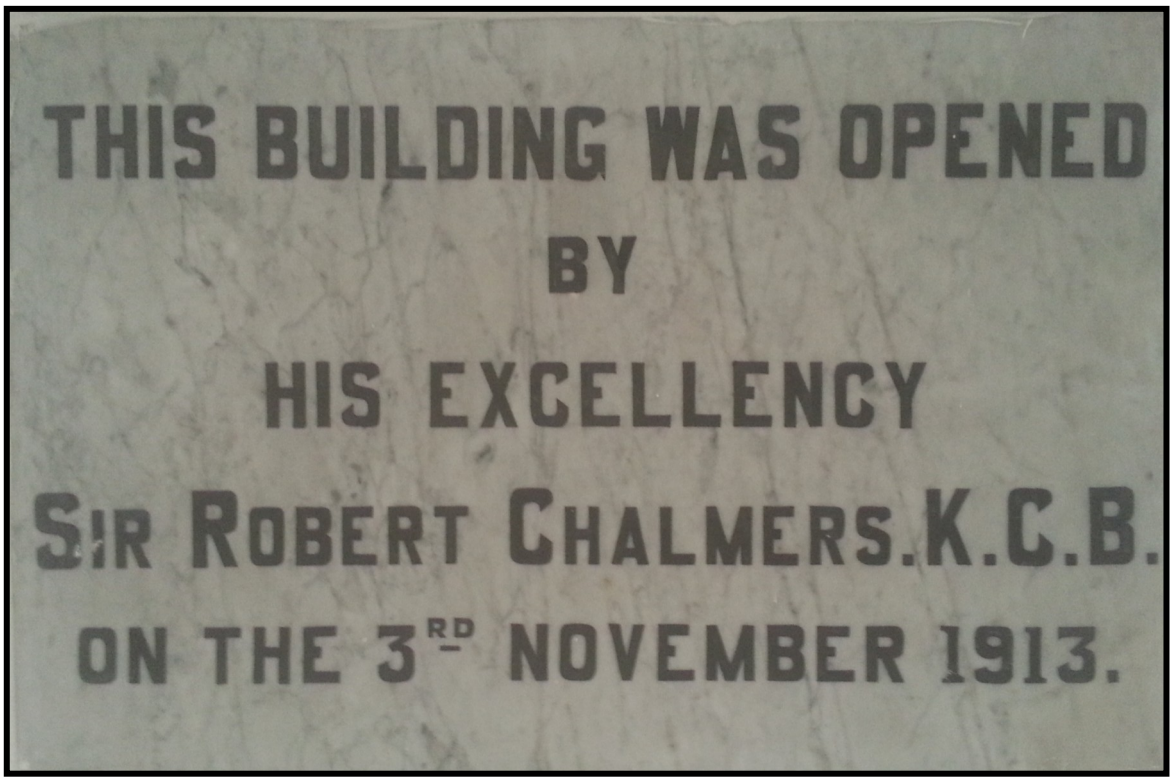
# 1913 - 2013
# Anatomy Block
# Centenary Souvenir


*Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine*
*University of Colombo*


THIS BUILDING WAS OPENED
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY
SIR ROBERT CHALMERS.K.C.B.
ON THE 3RD NOVEMBER 1913.

# Preface

The Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo is the second oldest Medical School in South Asia. It was founded in 1870 as the Colombo Medical School. The building of the Department of Anatomy, popularly known as the "Block", was ceremoniously opened on 3 November 1913 by the then Governor of Ceylon. It is one of the oldest buildings still standing from that era. It is only second to the Koch Memorial Clock tower that was built in 1881. The "Block" is the place where generations of Sri Lankan doctors began their life in medicine. It is a place which holds fond memories for them. The facade of this building is considered an architectural heritage and architecture students visit it to inspect it during their studies.

The Amphitheatre in the "Block", probably the only one of its kind in Sri Lanka, is a place that alumni love to visit. Some expatriate alumni on their short holidays do not forget to pay a visit to the "Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre" where their names are carved on its ancient wooden benches. Unforgettable days of their student days for most of the doctors are the dissections during which a cadaver is dissected with a group of batch mates in the dissection hall of the "Block".

Over the years the "Block" had suffered structural damage while withstanding the elements and is badly in need of repair. The right corner of the building has a cracked wall and the "Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre" needs replacement of some of its damaged wooden floor planks. The Architectural Conservation Division of the Archaeological Department of Sri Lanka recently inspected the building and recommended its conservation.

As we commemorate the Centenary of the Anatomy Block, it will be prudent to think of conserving this national heritage for many more years to come and to add modern conveniences to the interior of the building while maintaining its historic architectural exterior. The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo and Senior Professor of Anatomy, Prof. Rohan Jayasekara has pledged his fullest support and commitment to this endeavor. We seek your support, by way of donations, to restore the "Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre" to its former glory.

Centenary commemorations began in July with an Educational Workshop for Ordinary and Advanced Level Biology students titled "A Journey Through the Human Body" which was held from 29 July 2013 to 2 August 2013 with the participation of 3,500 students.

A special ceremony on 3 November 2013 at the "Block" is the main commemorative event. The ceremony includes the launch of this Centenary Souvenir and the naming of the Anatomy Museum as the "Prof P.S.S. Panditharatne Anatomy Museum".

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all who contributed towards the success of these events.

**Editorial Committee**

**The Anatomy Block, built in 1913 is the oldest building in the Faculty.**

**The Hallway**

**The Amphitheatre**
**(Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre)**

**Dissection Hall**

**The Museum**

# Editorial Committee

**Dr. Nirmala D. Sirisena**

**Prof. Vajira H.W. Dissanayake**

**Dr. M. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake**

**Dr. Ajith P. Malalasekera**

**Dr. N. Madhusha Jayasekara**

**Dr. A.M. Shakira Banu**

*"Those who have dissected or inspected many bodies have at least learned to doubt,*
*while those who are ignorant of anatomy and do not take the trouble to attend to it,*
*are in no doubt at all."*

***Giovanni Morgagni***

**(Father of Morbid Anatomy)**

# Anatomy Block Centenary Commemoration Project

## Organizing Committee

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MBBS, PhD. (N'CLE. UK.), CBiol, MSB (Lond)

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Dean, Faculty of Medicine

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Mr. D.M. Madushanka Dassanayaka

Miss. Iresha Liyanage

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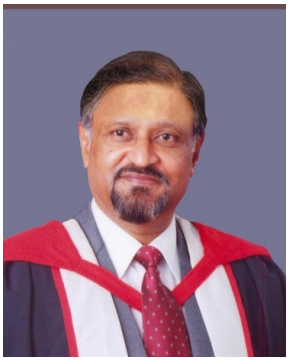


On the 3 November 2013, the magnificent and timeless building which is the home to the Department of Anatomy celebrates 100 years of dedicated service to the Nation. Today is a much looked forward to date in the 143 year history of this faculty, as the building moves gracefully into its second millennium. It is a day charged with understandable pride and a deep sense of belonging, for not only the present members of the staff but also for the alumni of the Faculty. On this momentous occasion, I am not only honoured but privileged to send this message of felicitation to the Department.

It is gratifying to note, that the achievements of the Department of Anatomy in the past 100 years have been simply remarkable. Your contributions that have opened new vistas in research, education both undergraduate and postgraduate and in the realm of academia will be forever etched in the history of this university.

Today, blessed with the present crop of able, dynamic and committed members, your Department is strongly poised to leap into its next century. At this point in its rich history, it is my duty to express my sincere gratitude to the many members of its staff who called it home, from Dr. Andree the first lecturer in Anatomy in 1870, through an entire century to the present team. I salute you all for your sterling contributions through the years that made this Department what it is today.

As you fill yourself today with nostalgia for your own college days, let me on behalf of the academic, administrative and the non academic staff of the Faculty of Medicine congratulate you on reaching this rare milestone and wish the Department of Anatomy and its staff the very best in the future.

**Prof. Rohan W. Jayasekara**
**Dean**

# Message from the Head of the Department

It is my pleasure and privilege to issue this message to the Anatomy Block Centenary Commemoration Souvenir.

The Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo our alma mater is the second oldest Medical School in South Asia. It was founded in 1870 as the Colombo Medical School. The building of the Department of Anatomy, popularly known as the "Block", was ceremoniously opened on the 3 November 1913 by the then Governor of Ceylon.

As we commemorate the Centenary of the Anatomy Block, it is prudent to think of conserving this national heritage, for many more years to come. We are most grateful to those alumni and well wishers who contributed and to those who continue to support this worthy project to bring the Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre to its former glory.

May I also take this opportunity to appreciate the dedication and hard work of those pillars of Anatomy, whose work has contributed to the success of healthcare achievements of the country. The Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, Demonstrators and other members of staff toiled to bring up the standard of Anatomy, and thereby the standards of healthcare in the country.

One special person whose contribution denoting a special appreciation will be honoured by naming the museum of the Department of Anatomy as the "Professor P.S.S. Panditharatne Anatomy Museum" at the Centenary Commemoration Ceremony today.

I must place on record the dynamic leadership and guidance extended by our Dean and Senior Professor of Anatomy, Prof. Rohan Jayasekara. I am indeed fortunate to have such a wonderful team of academics in our department without whose dedication, unity and support the centenary activities would not have been a success.

The contribution of the non academic staff of the department should be appreciated for their dedication and determination in meeting the challenges. We could not forget the medical undergraduates, mainly the students of the Block centenary year, and the M.Sc. Clinical Genetics and Genetic Diagnostics students who were very much involved in the highly successful Educational Workshop "Journey through the Human Body" which was a part of the Anatomy Block Centenary celebrations.

I wish the Anatomy Block Centenary Celebrations every success and hope that it will be a memorable day for all of you who are present here to grace the occasion today.

**Dr. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake**
**Head, Department of Anatomy**

# Message from the Project Adviser

3 November 2013 is a special day for all Sri Lankan doctors. It is the day when we commemorate the Centenary of the Anatomy "Block". The "Block" is not another building in a Medical School. It is a building, where the future lives of generations of doctors who served this country were shaped and will continue to be shaped. Those doctors of the past went on to develop a health system which is today the envy of the world – a system which delivers the best health gains for every dollar spent.

The Anatomy "Block" centenary therefore, is not another milestone. It is a time for us to reflect on the contributions that were made to this country by hundreds of men and women who worked within, as well as the thousands of students who passed through its hallowed walls. I hope that this souvenir would help us do that.

As we all know Sri Lanka has a rich tradition of Western Medicine going back several centuries. The Dutch Hospital in Colombo, established in 1681, is one of the oldest known modern hospitals in the Asian Region. The Colombo Medical School, established in 1870, is one of the earliest Medical Schools to have been established in Asia. The Sri Lanka Medical Association, established in 1887, is the oldest National Medical Association in Asia.

In that rich history the Anatomy "Block" holds a special place. Let us therefore, while celebrating this Centenary, resolve to preserve this magnificent edifice for future generations.

**Professor Vajira H. W. Dissanayake**
**Professor in Anatomy**
**Past President, Sri Lanka Medical Association**

# Programme

# 3 November 2013

| | |
|---|---|
| 08:30 am | Arrival of Guests |
| 09:00 am | National Anthem |
| 09:05 am | Lighting of the Traditional Oil Lamp |
| 09:20 am | Welcome Address |
| | Dr. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake |
| | Head/Department of Anatomy |
| 09:30 am | Introduction of the Keynote Speaker |
| | Dr. Ajith P. Malalasekera |
| | Senior Lecturer |
| | Department of Anatomy |
| 09:35 am | Keynote Address |
| | Prof. Rohan W. Jayasekara |
| | Chair and Senior Professor of Anatomy |
| | Dean of the Faculty of Medicine |
| | University of Colombo |
| | "Hundred Years & Beyond" |
| 10:15 am | Launch of the Centenary Souvenir |
| 10:25 am | Naming of the Anatomy Museum as the |
| | "Prof P.S.S. Panditharatne Anatomy Museum" |
| 10:35 am | Presentation of Certificates |
| 10:45 am | Vote of Thanks |
| | Prof. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake |
| | Professor in Anatomy |
| 11:10 am | Visit to the Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre & Refreshments |

# Extracts from the Keynote Address by Prof. Rohan W. Jayasekara Chair & Senior Professor of Anatomy

Stephen Ambrose a historian and biographer and an expert in plagiarism funnily enough, once said - **"To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; to steal from many is research."** If that's true, this lecture is the result of extensive research.

It is with a sense of humility coupled with a surging pride that I stand before you here today in this remarkable place our 'Dear Block", on this extraordinary day, to help celebrate the 100th Anniversary of this remarkable building, and celebrate the contribution of the Department of Anatomy to the field of Medicine, our people, our country and the world at large through thousands of graduates who have passed through the portals of this department. Our Centennial offers us not only an occasion to celebrate our distinguished history, but also provides a window through which we can begin contemplating our future.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to address this august body of professionals and well wishers on this occasion. As the Dean, I congratulate the Department of Anatomy on reaching this milestone.

This magnificent building in which we are today was not a typical work then, and it is not a typical building now. This building does not represent a vision of the future that everyone else eventually caught up with. It doesn't so much represent any particular time as it transcends our normal sense of time. This is the most important reason to talk about the sweep of a century, and to go backwards as well as forward, to make the point that this is one of those buildings and departments that show us with absolute clarity what the meaning of the word "timeless" is.

With the passing of years most of you bade farewell to your *Alma Mater* and today some of you are back, to enjoy each other's society in recalling the pleasures of the block days and telling and hearing of your own voyage since you launched your barks upon the tide of life.

History in the broadest sense means a totality of all past events. However, in narrating the history of a department, it is prudent to limit the narration to past events and historical facts known through the testimony of living persons, from memoirs, literary works, and other records having a bearing on this department.

In Roman mythology, Janus was the god of gates, doors, doorways, beginnings and endings. He had the power of seeing the future as well as the past. The past has always been a source of knowledge and the future a source of hope. Love of the past implies faith in the future and as we move forward, let us for a brief moment turn around and look at the past, the history of this department.

The year was 1913, when this majestic structure rose from the ground on Francis Road and the Department began business.

Dr. R. Andree was the first to teach Anatomy and Surgery in 1870. The Chair in Anatomy was created in 1927 and Dr. A. Gordon Smith was appointed as the first Professor of Anatomy. He was succeeded in 1930 by Dr. W. C. Osman Hill who was a British anatomist, primatologist, and a leading authority on primate anatomy during the 20th century. He was best known for his nearly completed eight-volume series, 'Primates: Comparative Anatomy and Taxonomy', which covered all living and extinct primates known at the time. He occupied the chair till 1944.

In 1945, Prof. P.K Chanmugam succeeded him and remained so till 1960. Information available is anecdotal and mainly from some of my teachers. He, I am told had his room next to this dissecting room, the same room which I occupy to date. An academic who enjoyed his post-prandial nap on his favourite 'anatomy armchair' as they all called it, which remained for many, many years. I replaced it by the way with a more comfortable couch.

The lovable Prof. M.J. Waas held the reins of Professor from 1960 to 1967. Prof. Waas was a gentleman with a heart of gold and a generosity that knew no bounds. Heartwarming stories of assistance to students to vault over the Block, the 2nd MBBS are a plenty.

With his retirement in 1967, the mantle of Professor of Anatomy passed on to Prof. F.L.W Jayewardene, known to all as Prof. Lester Jayewardene. A gentle giant always polite, clad in his 'not so white overcoat' held the students spellbound on the wonders of Embryology as he physically demonstrated with his anatomy the foldings and migrations of membranes and tissues with the skills of a mime artist.

Prof. Jayewardene had a lifelong association with physical anthropology. During his tenure as a member of the department, he initiated a study on body types which he should have conducted on voluntary subjects. But seizing the opportunity and vulnerability and of course the availability of a harvest of fine young men among the new students, which included the late Prof. Panditharatne, he politely requested for volunteers. None of them dared to refuse, with the 2nd MBBS looming in the horizon, and they all agreed to bare themselves full frontal, rear and sides to be photographed wearing simply their bare skins for the cause of Morphometry. Those photos stayed in the drawers of Anatomy for decades, unknown to most of us.

One quiet afternoon when I dropped in to Prof. Panditharatne's room for the customary 'tea chat', there he was performing surgery on those photos with a pair of scissors. Although I was curious, and wanted a quick peep, he forbade me from coming any closer, as he snipped away at the photos with a mischievous grin on his face, with his familiar nth cigarette for the day, dangling from his lips. Those photos belonged to his batch the 59ers as they called themselves. What a Calendar it would have made, of the top medical professionals I thought, for a moment. Perhaps a great rival to the saucy Michelin calendar, familiar to some of you. Perhaps we could have named it the Bridgestone calendar.

It was during the tenure of Prof. Lester Jayewardene, on the morning of the 1st of January 1974, 39 years, 11 months, 2 days and an hour to this very moment, that I walked in to this hallowed department as a relatively slim, young man of 24 years. At that time I was the 7th in the pecking order.

Following his retirement in 1975, Prof. P.S.S. Panditharatne our dear 'boss', began his term of office as the Professor of Anatomy. We inherited from our Prof. Sobitha Panditharatne, the concept of a family with strong cohesive bonds that weld a team together, marinated with a mixture of unquestionable loyalty, ramrod honesty and undying dedication. These traits we propagated through the years, and I am proud to say that today, they form the bulwark that sustains our department.

His vision and his dreams we strive to keep alive to this day, and they will live forever.

That, is our strength. Neuroanatomy was his forte and many generations have had the good fortune of learning at his feet. His nimble fingers worked tirelessly during every spare minute, to produce what is today the finest collection of dissected specimens in the country and on par with the Anatomy Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

It was during his tenure that I began my academic growth spurt and was encouraged to flap my wings. I was charged and rearing to go as any young man would. Carl Zimmerer once said "**Only mushrooms can grow in the shadow of trees, but shrubs need light in order to grow. If you recognize that your father is a tree, you should move away and out of his shadow"**." In my case he, was the tree that moved away, I had no shadow to restrain me. He allowed me to grow and nurtured all of us. In 1983 the Human Genetics Unit was born, and this October, we celebrated 30 years of service to the nation. In 1998, Prof. retired. Sadly on September 2, 2005, he left us for good.

With the dawn of the new Millennium I became the Professor of Anatomy in March 2000 and the first Chair Professor in the University of Colombo for the new millennium. The portraits of my predecessors, all of them formidable personalities used to hang on the original 'WALL OF FAME' in the Professors room. A grim reminder to me a mere mortal, of their high caliber and erudition.

In the latter part of the first decade of this millennium, a part of the grand old lady – the ancient eastern portion of the Department was ailing and terminal. The authorities then decided to put it out of its misery and it was soon demolished, having made plans for a 14 storey structure to replace it.

With the infusion of new staff possessing a wide array of specialties, the department experienced throughout the closing years of the past century and the first and second decades of the present one, an academic renaissance which is indeed a pride to us all. This year as we celebrate the centenary of this department and as we launch into its next millennium, the dignified maturity and the firm spirit of initiating, innovating and implementing has never burned so bright.

We have, during the past thirteen years, established international collaborations with fifteen institutions scattered in seven countries spread across three continents and

established five International Networks.

In postgraduate education, we have launched Masters courses in Clinical Genetics, Genetic Diagnostics and in Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine. We have so far produced four PhDs with four more in the programme. Ten postgraduates completed their MScs with twenty more in the programme. In the service component, a clinical genetics service is provided with daily clinics supplemented by a laboratory service that provides cytogenetic analyses and molecular diagnostics for genetic conditions and infectious diseases. A strong undergraduate teaching programme in Genetics, introduced to the country by us three decades ago is now firmly established in Colombo as well as in other faculties. Our involvement in National Policy making has certainly sensitized and persuaded Institutions that make policy to enact legislations in Medical Ethics, Reproductive Technology and Genetically Modified Food to name a few. The success of our research programme is clearly evident by the fact that we have attracted more than 200 million rupees worth of research funding in the past 10 years.

All this are a reality today, due to the team that I am privileged to be leading. A 'Dream Team' chosen by the Almighty and given me. A team that any captain would be proud to lead. A team which I have, and which I will always cherish. This includes the Administrative and non academic staff who serve us with deep loyalty and love.

Friends !!!!!

You the alumni and the well wishers are assured, that the department is in safe hands and will be guided with great care and concern as we step into the next 100 years of its life. For the achievements I mentioned, I wish to remember with gratitude and love the pioneer Professors of this Department and other members of the staff, some of whom are here today and those who tended and cared for it and passed on the flame of progress in the years gone by.

Man spends his life reasoning with the past, complaining about the present and trembling for the future. That will not be for this Department that is basking in the glory of a rich past. Today, faith has given us the courage to face the present with confidence and the future with expectancy. With the good and caring wishes of all of you, and an abundance of blessings from above, this Department will now look to the future with great expectations and confidence.

In conclusion, to my dearest Anatomy family, I would like to say, thank you for being there for me. You were there with every heart beat, every sigh and every move of mine. THANK YOU !!!!!! We are now a 100 years young and as we look to the future, let us embark on it with great hope, great optimism and great confidence.

Thank you all for your gracious presence.

# Academic Staff Department of Anatomy in 2013

**Seated left to right : Dr. D. J. Anthony, Prof. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake, Prof. Rohan W. Jayasekara, Dr. M. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake, Dr. Ajith P. Malalasekera**
**Standing left to right : Dr. Hemali W. Goonasekera, Dr. Nirmala D. Sirisena, Dr. Mirna Kumaradas, Dr. Udari Liyanage, Dr. Dulika Sumathipala.**

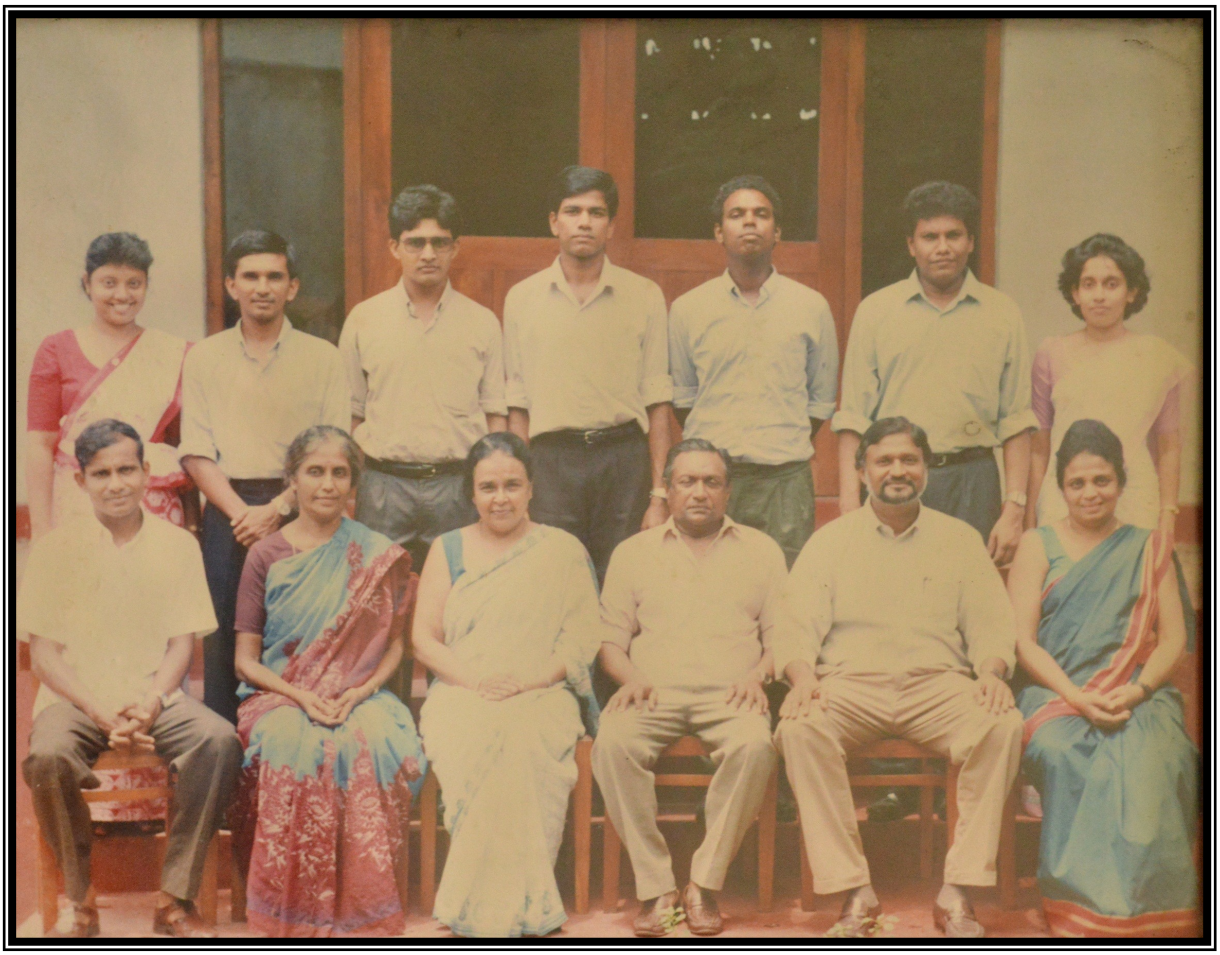
## Non Academic Staff Department of Anatomy in 2013


**From left to right: Mr. W.A. Sisira de Mel, Mr. W.A. Gunadasa, Mr. D.S. Nimal Susantha, Mr. M.N.M. Nazeel, Mr. D.M. Madushanka Dassanayaka, Mr. L.G. Thiwanka Thushara, Mr. T.W. Pallie, Mr. M.M. Karunaratne, Mr. V.S. Perera, Mr. P.K.A.N. Weerasinghe, Mr. R. Kulendran, Mr. E.M.N.R. De Saram, Mrs. S.S.S.M. Bandaranayake, Miss. K.P. Gunawardana, Miss. Iresha Liyanage and Miss. P.K.D.S. Nisanasala.**

## Demonstrators Department of Anatomy in 2013

**From left to right : Dr. H. G.P.K. Wijerathne, Dr. A.M. Shakira Banu, Dr. M.H.R. Guruge, Dr. K. Sivasuganthan, Dr. N. M. Jayasekara.**

# Staff Department of Anatomy in 1995



**Seated Left to Right - Prof. B.J.J.F. Perera (Associate Professor), Dr. S. Satchithanandan (Senior Lecturer), Prof. Shanthi Goonawardena (Associate Professor), Prof. P.S.S. Panditharatne (Chair and Professor), Prof. Rohan W. Jayasekara (Associate Professor), Dr. B.E. Stephen (Senior Lecturer).**

**Standing Left to Right - Dr. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake (Demonstrator), Dr. Kanchana Singappuli (Demonstrator), Dr. R. Arulkumaran (Demonstrator), Dr. Sanath Wanigasooriya (Demonstrator), Dr. D.J. Anthony (Lecturer), Dr. B. Nirmalaraj (Demonstrator), Dr. Piyusha Atapattu (Demonstrator)**

***"I profess to learn and to teach anatomy not from books but from dissections,***

***not from the tenets of Philosophers but from the fabric of Nature."***

***- William Harvey***

***De Motu Cordis (1628), The Circulation of the blood and other writings, trans. Kenneth J. Franklin (1957), Dedication to Doctor Argent, 7.***

# History of the Colombo Medical School

## The beginnings

The Colombo Medical School, as it was originally named, was duly declared open by the Governor of Ceylon, Sir Hercules Robinson, later Earl of Rosmead, after whom Rosmead Place has been named. Early requirements were competence in English and certificates of good character. A board of examiners was appointed from time to time to select the applicants. The standard of knowledge for admission was raised periodically and by 1885 was as high as that of a provincial medical school in the United Kingdom (7).

The School was located in a block of buildings at General Hospital, Colombo (GHC) which later became the female surgical ward. The GHC by then had been in existence for only six years. When the school was opened, the staff comprised Loos as principal and two lecturers, namely Dr E L Koch and Dr R Andree, and not three as envisaged by Charsley.

The school was a fee-levying institution. In 1870, students paid an annual fee of £2. This payment was remitted only under special circumstances and only with the Governor's sanction. In 1882, the fee was raised to Rs. 50, and in 1884, the authorities were compelled to further increase it to Rs. 180 in order to be uniform with the rates prevailing in Britain. Such conformity was necessary for obtaining recognition for the local diploma from the British Colleges (8). In 1874, a 'stipendiary' class was formed when six students received an allowance of Rs. 15 a month each with quarters in the hospital. The stipend was discontinued in 1881.

## Early hospitals

Until its incorporation as the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ceylon in 1942, the Colombo Medical School (later named Ceylon Medical College) was administered as a division of the Civil Medical Department or its successor, the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services, and was subordinate to the Principal Civil Medical Officer (PCMO) or the director of Medical Sanitary Services (DM and SS). The immediate head of the institution was the Principal, but in1899 the method of administration was changed so that the PCMO became *ex officio* Principal, while the day to day affairs were in charge of a newly appointed Registrar. There were three Principals who held office before the change took place in 1899. They were James Loos, E L Koch and J L Vanderstraaten.

James Loos, at the age of 16 years, was a member of the first group of students to proceed to Calcutta in 1838. When 44 years old, he obtained MD St Andrews. His appointment as the first Principal was logical as it was his recommendation that prompted the creation of the School. He relinquished office in 1875 in order to accept the post of Colonial Surgeon, Central Province.

E L Koch, who was one of the original lecturers, succeeded Loos in 1875. He too had qualified in Calcutta, and followed this up with MD from Aberdeen University, where he was the fifth Sri Lankan to gain admission. He was concurrently Surgeon at GHC. He died

in 1877 of sepsis from a wound he received while performing an autopsy. The impressive clock tower at the entrance to the School on Kynsey Road was a memorial to him erected by his friends and colleagues. The government joined in this tribute by contributing half the cost of the clock.

J L Vanderstraaten MD (St Andrews), MRCP (Lond) succeeded Koch in 1878 and continued in that post for a record 21 years. He began life as an assistant in a chemist's shop in Galle. He managed to enter Bengal Medical College with much difficulty and joined the Civil Medical Department in 1863. In 1875 he became the first ever physician appointed to GHC. He held the two posts of physician and principal from 1879 and 1885.

It needs to be emphasised that first that the first three principals of the Medical School were products of Bengal Medical College. Thus the influence Calcutta had on early medical education in Sri Lanka was considerable.

The School progressed under the tutelage of Vanderstraaten, and by the time he retired in 1899, it had earned an enviable reputation. Dr Kynsey praised it for producing doctors who were able to successfully control epidemics. Mrs Gordon-Cumming complimented it for the students whom she described as "highly trained in all the learning of European schools" (9).

In 1880 the school was raised to the status of a college by Sir John Douglas, acting Governor, on the recommendation of Dr Kynsey (7). Under its new name, the Ceylon Medical College continued to prosper. In 1887 the Principal and the Secretary of the college wrote a letter to the PCMO seeking recognition from the GMC. Accordingly, a Privy council held on 29 December 1887 at Osborne House, the country retreat of queen Victoria in the Isle of Wight, granted this request. The diploma of Licentiate of Medicine and Surgery (LMS) which was granted by the College became registrable in the Colonial List of the Medical Register under section 13 of the Act of 1886, without further examination. Thus the Ceylon Medical College ceased to be an 'elementary school' as originally conceived by the authorities, and became a medical school entitled to produce fully qualified medical practitioners. This arrangement prevailed with the degree of MBBS too which replaced LMS in 1942, until the concession was withdrawn in the 1970's (10).

In 1870 when the School was established, the course of studies lasted only three years. The prospectus issued in 1873 lays down an increased duration of four years (11). In 1884, it was further extended to five years.

Originally, the course was divided into sessions, each lasting one year. The intention to divide each academic year into two terms in accordance with the custom prevailing in Europe was announced by the PCMO in 1875. The short term from 1 May to 31 July was referred to as the summer term, while the other from 1 October to 31 March was the winter term. The adoption of such nomenclature, which had no relevance to a tropical country, reflected a desire by the authorities to emulate British practice however inappropriate it might be.

There was no organized system of clinical teaching from the date of its opening till 1 November 1875, and the defect manifested as the careless and ignorant manner in which

some of the graduates discharged their duties on appointment to outstation hospitals. In 1885 there was more organization. The third and fourth year students worked for equal periods in the medical and surgical wards and the outpatient departments of GHC and de Soysa Lying in Home. Before the opening of the latter institution in 1879, students clerked only at the GHC.

**New premises**

The School which began in a humble way in GHC was moved later to spacious grounds opposite, where it stands today. The generous benefactor who donated this land in 1875 was Mudaliyar Samson d'Abrew Wijegooneratne Rajapakse. Born in Weliwitta in the Southern Province, he was descendant of a long line of low country chieftains, and owned extensive coconut and cinnamon lands. It is said that he contributed more for education than perhaps any other contemporary Sri Lankan. He established prizes or scholarships in practically every college in the country. Besides his interest in education, he made a significant contribution to the cause of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

The new Medical School was designed in 1875 by Mr Frank Vine, Provincial Assistant to the Public Works Department. Some interesting comments about the College premises as they were in 1885 have been left behind by a visitor, J Davies Thomas MD, FRCS. He wrote that the "College was situated within extensive grounds of its own, planted with coconut palms and various native trees… It contains lecture rooms, a good chemical laboratory and a convenient museum". His comments about the availability of bodies for anatomical dissection are quite revealing. An ample of subjects was available as the Ceylonese had no serious prejudices against post-mortem examinations. Bodies were not preserved in formalin those days, but "injected with arsenic and the parts… kept 48 hours" (12).

Kynsey was PCMO and consequently administrative head of the Medical School for 22 years. During the greater part of this period he had Vanderstraaten, an able assistant, as Principal. The two of them worked in tandem in developing the School, and when they laid down their respective offices at the end of their long innings, the School had become a well-established institution which drew contemporary praise.

When Kynsey retired, Longdon Place in Colombo was renamed Kynsey Road in his honour. This is an apt street to have been named after Kynsey, for it runs past the premier hospital in the country as well as the College, two of the institutions he nurtured with care during their formative years. Sir James Longdon was Governor from 1877 to 1883, and it is rather surprising that the name of a former Governor, especially one under whom he served should have been replaced by that of Kynsey, undoubtedly a tribute of high order (1).

**Early students**

The medial school opened in 1870 with 25 students, but at the end of the three year course, only 12 presented themselves for the final examination. Six of them were successful: Edwin C Perera, R C Aldons, S Waytelingam, H A Phillips, E N Schokman and P Ohlmus. In the first six years of the existence of the Medical School, 18 men qualified,

and of them 16 joined government service, and one the plantation sector. The remaining one went to England for higher studies.

A considerable number of graduates qualifying from the Medical School belonged to the Burgher community. On 1 June, 1875, for example, there were 16 Burghers among the 33 students on the roll. This ethnic proportion was, in fact, evident throughout the better part of the 19 century. The first women students to join the College too belonged to the same community. There was probably more than one reason for this affinity for medicine among the Burghers. In the early years of the British period, western medicine was largely alien to the aspirations of the other ethnic groups in the country. This was not the case with the Burghers, who as descendants of the Dutch, had some rapport with western medicine. Further, English was the medium of instruction at the Medical School where admission requirements shut out many from the other ethnic groups (10).

**University status**

Agitation for a university began in the mid-19 century, and gathered momentum by the beginning of the 20 century. The Ceylon University Association formed in 1906 by a western educated elite group urged the establishment of a national university. In response to its persistent demands, the government decided to set up a University College, but the intervention of the war delayed it till 1921. The University College was regarded as a preliminary step towards the establishment of a fully-fledged university.

The University of Ceylon came into being on 1 July 1942 after nearly two decades of delay due to various reasons, namely constitutional changes of 1931, the controversy over the proposed site of the university, the economic depression of the 1930s and the malaria epidemic of 1934-35. The Ceylon Medical College and the Ceylon University College became the nucleus of the University of Ceylon, and the Medical College assumed the status of Faculty of Medicine. The diploma of LMS was replaced by the degree of MBBS.

The fierce and protracted debate whether the University should be sited in Colombo or Kandy came to be known as the Battle of the Sites. It was finally decided to locate it at Peradeniya. Pending the construction of the buildings at the-new site, it functioned at the Colombo locations of the Medical and University Colleges. The first unit to move to Peradeniya was the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science in 1949. It may be recalled that the Department of Veterinary Science was temporarily housed in the old pharmacy block of the Faculty of Medicine till then. While the transfer of the Faculties to Peradeniya was in progress, there was an increased demand for university education, and consequently new Faculties including a second one for medicine were established at Peradeniya, while retaining the established ones in Colombo. The Faculty of Medicine in Peradeniya was started in 1962. At first, teachers for the new Faculty were drawn from the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo, but later separate professors and lecturers were recruited.

There were now two campuses of equal size in Colombo and Peradeniya. Subsequentiy the University of Colombo was established on 1 October 1967. However, in 1972, the four universities which had by then been set up, as well as the Ceylon College of Technology at Katubedda became campuses in a single university styled University of Sri Lanka with

headquarters in Senate House in Colombo. In 1978, university status was again restored to the respective campuses, and the Colombo Campus became the University of Colombo.

**Faculty of Medicine**

In 1942, when the Faculty of Medicine was established, there were only five chairs, in physiology, anatomy, pathology, medicine and surgery. By 1940, even before the setting up of the University, there was agitation for the establishment of a chair in obstetrics and gynecology. In 1942, Dr G A W Wickramasuriya was appointed the first Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He had gained an international reputation for demonstrating the passage of malaria parasite across the placenta to infect the foetus. Wickramasuriya unfortunately died before he could take up the post, and Dr Nicholas Attygalle became Professor in 1944.

Professor W A E Karunaratne was the first Dean of the new Faculty, and took over the administration from the Registrar, Dr Startup. Professor Attygalle was elected Dean in succession to Professor Karunaratne in 1945. Attygalle, who became a legend in his own time, had a profound impact on medical education in the country, first as Dean and then as Vice Chancellor when he succeeded Sir Ivor Jennings in 1955.

During Sir Nicholas Attygalle's domination of the medical scene, as Dean from 1945 to 1953, and Vice Chancellor from 1955 to 1966, the number of chairs in the Faculty rapidly increased. In 1949, O E R Abhayaratne was appointed the first Professor of Public Health, a subject that until then came under the purview of the Professor of Medicine. In the same year C C de Silva became Professor of Paediatrics, but paediatrics remained as a sub - department under the Professor of Medicine till the late 1950s (21).

The next chair to be established was in forensic medicine when G S W de Saram was appointed in 1951. Dr V Sivalingam was appointed Professor of Parasitology in 1956. The Professor of Physiology was in charge of the sub-departments of pharmacology and biochemistry till S W Bibile and Dr A A Hoover were appointed as professors and heads of these departments in 1958. Dr TED Chapman became the first Professor of Bacteriology also in 1958. An unusual development that took place about 1952 was the appointment of co-professors in the three clinical subjects of medicine, surgery and obstetrics and gynecology. The first holders of these posts were J R Blaze, M V P Peiris and D A Ranasinghe respectively. This class of co-professors did not last long, for the system was abandoned shortly after some members of the academic staff were transferred to the new Faculty at Peradeniya.

A chair in psychological medicine had been provided for since 1949 (20), but it took over two decades for it to materialise. Dr C P Wijesinghe was appointed Professor of Psychiatry in the Seventies. O E R Abhayaratne (1953-57) succeeded N Attygalle. The subsequent Deans were A S Dissanaike (1967-70), S R Kottegoda (1970-82), Daphne Attygalle (1982-86), T E J de Fonseka (1986-89), N Kodagoda (1989-94) and M M Ismail.

***Dr. C.G. Uragoda, Retired Consultant Chest Physician & Medical Historian***
***Past President, Sri Lanka Medical Association***

***Extracts from the article "History of the Colombo Medical School" published in the Colombo Medical School 125 Anniversary Commemorative Volume - Reproduced with kind permission from the author (Dr. C.G. Uragoda) and Editor (Prof. Colvin Goonaratna).***

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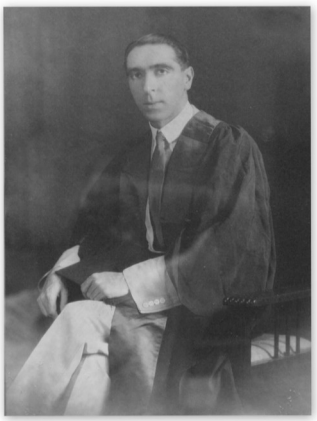
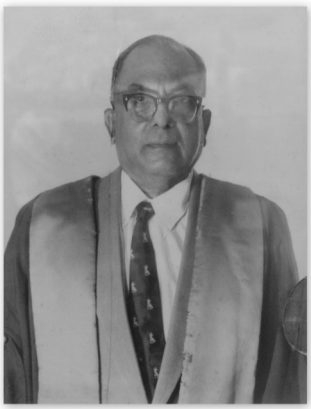
# Chairs in Anatomy

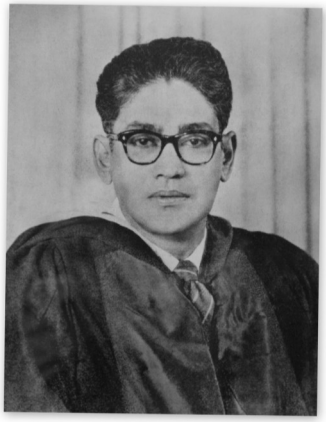


A. Gordon Smith
MBChB(Glas), FRCS(Eng)
(1927 - 1929)

W.C Osman Hill
MD, FRSE, FLS, FZE
(1930 - 1944)



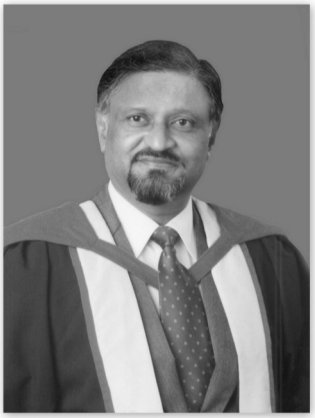
P.K Chanmugam
LMS(Cey), LRCP(Lond),
FRCS(Eng), MSC(Lond)
(1945 - 1960)



M.J Wass
LMS(Cey), PhD(Manch)
(1960 - 1967)

F.L.W Jayawardena
MBBS(Cey), PhD(Edin)
(1968 - 1975)

P.S.S Panditharatne
MBBS, PhD(Manch), Hon FCS(SL)
(1975 - 1998)



Rohan W. Jayasekara
MBBS, PhD(N'CLE. UK), CBiol, MSB(Lond)
(1999 - to date)

# Dr. William Charles Osman Hill

William Charles Osman Hill (13 July 1901 – 25 January 1975) was a British anatomist, primatologist and a leading authority on primate anatomy during the 20th century.

He started his studies at King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys in Birmingham, while his degrees were obtained from University of Birmingham later including his medical education in 1924.

During this period, he showed his excellency by winning three junior student prizes and Ingleby scholarship in Midwifery. Following his medical education, though he became a lecturer in Zoology, he had been teaching anatomy under an apprenticeship until 1930. He obtained his M.D. with honours in 1925 and earned his ChB and FRCS while in medical school.

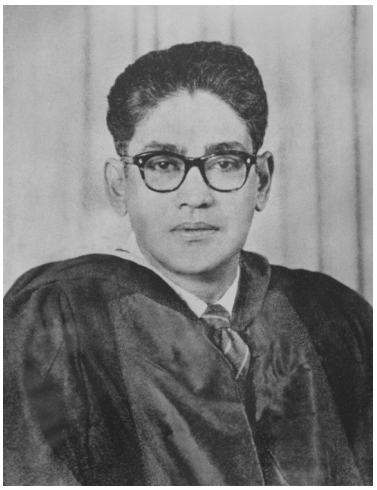
In 1930, Osman Hill moved to Sri Lanka where his career took shape. Here in the Department of Anatomy (during which time it was known as Ceylon Medical College), Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, he became both Chair of Anatomy and Professor of Anatomy. In Sri Lanka, his position allowed him to pursue anthropological studies of the indigenous *Veddah* people and comparative anatomy of primates. He held positions in Ceylon for about 14 years doing various studies related to primates and parrots and developed a private menagerie of exotic and native species. Upon his arrival in UK, this menagerie was divided between the London Zoo and National Zoological Gardens of Sri Lanka.

During the remaining part of his life, he had been a Prosector in Zoological Society of London, Visiting Scholar at Emory University in Georgia and the Director of the Yerkes National Primate Research Centre (YNPRC) in Atlanta. The Royal Society of Edinburgh honoured him as Fellow in 1955 and the Royal College of Surgeons of England made him a Hunterian Trustee in 1969 after his retirement.

Osman Hill wrote 248 papers and other publications including his best known writing 'Primates: Comparative Anatomy and Taxonomy' published by Edinburgh University (1955-1974). In the Journal of Medical Primatology, R. N. Fiennes describes him as, 'Today we think that structure cannot be divorced from function; anatomists have become physiologists, physiologists biochemists, and biochemists physicists; anatomy probes the sub-molecular. However, our modern world was soundly built on the foundations laid by men such as Osman Hill, and men such as he still fills an important role."

He had been remembered as a 'distinguished anatomist, eminent primatologist'; he had an excellent skill in dissection by his ability to make quick but accurate sketch of anatomical features with his scalpel. Osman Hill's relentless work in Anatomy ended only after he reached the final stage of his terminal illness with diabetes.

# Professor M Joseph Waas



Professor Moderage Joseph Waas a lecturer, reader, and professor of Anatomy completed his schooling at St. Joseph's College, Colombo. Then he entered Ceylon Medical College and graduated with L.M.S. (Ceylon) in 1940 completing his examinations with First Class Honours. He began his career as a House Officer at Maternity Hospital and General Hospital Colombo. He joined the Department of Anatomy as a Demonstrator in 1946 and became a Lecturer a year later.

He was attached to the University of Manchester for postgraduate training under Professor GAG Mitchell and he was awarded a Ph.D. on the results of his thesis entitled 'The Blood Supply of the Meninges' in 1951. He became the Professor of Anatomy in 1960 and held the post of the Head of the Department for the next seven years. He was an examiner in Anatomy at the Overseas Fellowship Examination of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1963, 1964 & 1967. He became Visiting Professor of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1967 and held the post till 1971.

He received a WHO fellowship in 1954 to study Dental Histology and Dental Anatomy with special reference to teaching in UK. He followed courses for the Primary F.R.C.S. and Primary F.D.S.R.C.S. examinations conducted by Royal College of Surgeons in Anatomy, Histology and Dental Histology.

He attended a study tour in 1959 organized by WHO and visited medical schools in Madras, New Delhi, Patisala and Amritsar. He attended the Anatomical Congress in India. He also visited several Medical Schools in USA and Canada to study the curriculum in Anatomy. In 1965 he obtained a Fulbright fellowship to study electron microscopy in the Department of Anatomy in New York University Medical Centre.

# Emeritus Professor P. S. S. Panditharatne

Sobitha Sanjaya Panditharatne, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy, died recently from cerebral haemorrhage. Scholar, educationist, man of vision, teacher, and researcher, Professor Panditharatne had his early education at leading Buddhist Schools in Ceylon, Dharmaraja College and Ananda College. This instilled in him the Buddhist traditions of compassion and fairness.

He entered the Faculty of Medicine, of the University of Ceylon in 1953, and graduated MBBS in 1959, completing all the examinations with Honours. Following his house appointments at the General Hospital in Galle, he joined the Department of Anatomy as a demonstrator in 1962, and became a lecturer a year later, after passing the primary FRCS (England).

Dr. Panditharatne came under the influence of Professor GAG Mitchel, Neuroanatomist of international repute, who directed his research on cranial nerves. He was awarded the PhD from the University of Manchester in 1967 and returned to Ceylon, to be appointed Senior Lecturer in Anatomy at the Colombo Medical Faculty. He was next elevated to the Chair as Professor of Anatomy and Head of the Department, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. He held this position for 22 years, retiring in 1998 as Senior Professor. In recognition of his services to medical education, he was awarded the Emeritus Professorship by the University.

He faced many challenges with the introduction of the new medical school curriculum, and restructured it, devoting more time and effort to fundamental principles, and pioneered the introduction of MCQs to objectively assess the knowledge of students. A much sought-after teacher in basic sciences, Professor Panditharatne, was an examiner for MS Surgery Part I and the MS Dental Surgery Part I for decades. In recognition of his contribution to surgical education, the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka awarded him the Honorary Fellowship of the College in 1989.

His skilled hands made him an excellent prosector, which led to the birth of the human anatomy museum. He dissected, mounted and labelled over two hundred human body parts for self-study by students. This museum is on par with the anatomy museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Professor Panditharatne held responsible positions, as Chairman of the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Committee of the Faculty, Member of the Standing Committee of the Medical and Dental Sciences of the University Grants Commission, Member of the Senate, University of Colombo, Member of Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, and was acting Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo, on many occasions.

Apart from his commitment to the University, Professor Panditharatne was invited to be the Registrar of the Sri Lanka Medical Council, at a time when the need for reorganisation

and modernisation was long overdue. He was the Registrar of the SLMC, for a total of 11 years and relinquished the post due to ill health. He implemented many progressive changes in the method of registration of local and foreign medical graduates and other personnel in paramedical disciplines.

A remarkable personality, his appearance was rugged and stern, often masking the kindness beneath. He inspired the academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Anatomy to work as a team. He was mentor, advisor, colleague, and role model to all of us. Even after his retirement, he shared our joys as we celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, successes and promotions. He won the admiration of his colleagues and students.

It was traditional to celebrate his birthday in the Department. Unfortunately, this did not materialise this year due to his ill health. However, none wished to miss the event, and the entire staff of the Anatomy held the felicitation at his residence on the 21st of April with his wife Manel, children and grandchildren. It was an enjoyable event, but was to be our last meeting with him. He died on the 2 September 2005.

He has left us a legacy of unity and service to others.

***Benitta E Stephen***
***Professor Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo,***

***Ceylon Medical Journal Vol.50(4) 2005: 182***

# Albert J Chalmers and W C Osman Hill: The Pioneers

Ceylon Medical School was opened in 1870 and it was placed under a Principal who in turn was James Loos, E L Koch and J L Vanderstraaten. When the last named retired after 21 years in the post, the School which became a College in 1880, came under the Principal Civil Medical Officer (PCMO), who was head of the Medical Department. He, however, was ex-officio Principal, while its day to day running was in the hands of the Registrar, who was first appointed in 1899. The second registrar appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies was Dr Albert J Chalmers.

The second Professor of Anatomy appointed to the Ceylon Medical College was W C Osman Hill. Medical College was combined with Ceylon University College to form the University of Ceylon in 1942. He continued as Professor of Anatomy in the University till 1944.

**Dr Albert J Chalmers**

Albert John Chalmers was born in 1870 in Manchester. He had his medical education in the Universities of Liverpool and London. In 1890 he graduated MB ChB, winning the Gold Medal. In the same year he was appointed a Fellow of the Liverpool College, a position he held for 2 years. In 1893 he was successful in the MD examination and in 1895 he graduated FRCS England. In 1897 he joined the West African Medical Service, where he took part in an Ashanti war with the British Army in Gold Coast (now Ghana). In 1901 he applied for and obtained the post of Registrar of Ceylon Medical College (Editor, 1920a; Editor, 1920b).

When he assumed duties in 1901, the doctors in Sri Lanka were happy that a well-qualified man was appointed as the working head of the Medical College. Dr Chalmers found that the Medical College was in a poor condition with regard to lecturers and buildings. Correcting these defects was not an easy task, as the people at the top were quite immune to his suggestions at first. However, he managed to gradually impose his will in order to improve the place.

He detected many areas in the medical education at that time that needed corrections. One was the absence of proper buildings to teach various subjects. One of the first items in his agenda was to put up a new Anatomy Block. He succeeded in this endeavor, but it took a long time to implement his decision. The delay was due to the cost of a new building which irked the government. The new building was opened a century ago in 1913, while he resigned his post a year before in 1912.

When I gained admission to the Faculty of Medicine in 1948, lectures in anatomy were held in the Lecture Theatre that was built according to Dr Chalmers' plan. I still remember Dr Anthonis, who had just returned from England with FRCS degree and was appointed as a Consultant Surgeon to the Colombo General Hospital. He lectured to us in this theatre. His lectures were full of fun, and I remember one in which he said that the

pubic hair of the male was with apex of a triangle pointing upwards, while that of a female was pointing in the reverse direction. I presumed this Lecturer Theatre still exists. Other portions of the Anatomy Block built by Chalmers, such as the front entrance from Francis Road could be seen now.

Another improvement to medical education in Sri Lanka was the appointment of whole-time lecturers to teach some of the subjects. One of these was Pathology, which he said was to be combined with that of Director of the Bacteriological Institute (now known as Medical Research Institute). His suggestion was accepted by the Government, which was extremely lucky to obtain the services of Professor Aldo Castellani, who worked in Sri Lanka from 1903 to 1915. The two of them worked together and wrote the famous book on Tropical Medicine (Castellani and Chalmers, 1913). This book was considered the best contribution ever published on Tropical Medicine. Castellani published another book, in which he mentions the life he led in Sri Lanka (Castellani, 1968). In this book, which he kindly sent me when I was working in Kandy, he writes: - "I left Ceylon in January 1915, but part of my soul remained there. The memory of the Enchanted Island stirs in my heart an emotion which can only be expressed as love. I was the lover of that wonderful country then, I still am and I shall be to the end of my days."

Chalmers addressed a letter to the University of London to persuade it to recognize the local medical examinations. The University contacted Prof Herdman, later Sir William A Harding, FRS (Uragoda, 2013; p 139), who was due to sail to Sri Lanka in the near future to report on pearl oysters (Herdman, 1903-1906), to investigate this request. On Herdman's recommendation, University of London agreed to recognize two of the Professional examinations. Several students availed of this concession and went to England to complete their degree.

Chalmers was short of a Lecturer in Biology which was at that time a subject taught in the Medical College. About this time the post of Director of the Museum fell vacant. Chalmers wrote to Professor Herdman of Liverpool to persuade Dr Willey, DSc to apply for the post. When he came to Sri Lanka in order to assume duties, Chalmers got him to give those lectures. Chalmers himself delivered the lectures in Physiology.

In addition to the book on Tropical Medicine, which he wrote with Prof. Castellani, he was the author of a volume entitled *Simple medical directions for the use of Government officials in Ceylon.* This book was similar to the one he wrote while working in Gold Coast (now Ghana). The success he achieved with that book would have prompted him to write a similar one in Sri Lanka. This book ran into several editions and was once reprinted posthumously (Chalmers, 1921).

Soon after he came to Sri Lanka, he joined the Ceylon Branch of the British Medical Association and started to reorganise its activities. Meetings were held more frequently and more papers read. He became its Honorary Secretary and in 1907 he was elected as its President (Editor, 1920b). He was responsible for the Ordinance for the Registration of Medical Officers.

He improved the quality of teaching at the Ceylon Medical College so as to reach international levels at that time. In 1912 he took leave and went to England. At that time

Sir Allan Perry, who was Principal Civil Medical Officer (equal to present day Director General of Health) was going to retire. Dr Chalmers applied for the post and he should have been selected as he had both academic qualifications (MD, FRCS) and the experience of running the Ceylon Medical College extremely well. Since he did not get the post, he resigned from the post of Registrar.

In 1913 he was appointed as Director of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratory in Khartoum. He was a Member of the Sleeping Sickness Commission and of the Archaeological Commission of Sudan. In 1920 he was on his way to Japan when he was taken ill and died in Calcutta probably from pneumonia. His friends and admirers in Sri Lanka donated money for a medal to be awarded to a student each year.

**Professor W C Osman Hill**

W C Osman Hill was the second Professor of Anatomy appointed to the Ceylon Medical College, Colombo, the first being G Gordon Smith (1927-1929). Before Smith's appointment, Anatomy was taught by Lecturers.

Osman Hill was born in 1901 and his initial education was in a school in Birmingham. He then attended University of Birmingham and obtained BSc, followed by the medical degree from the same University in 1924. He was made a Lecturer in Zoology at the same University, in 1925 he was awarded MD (Birmingham) and FRCS (Eng). In 1930 he changed his post from Lecturer in Zoology to that of Lecturer in Anatomy at Birmingham.

In the same year he was appointed Professor of Anatomy at Ceylon Medical College (Uragoda, 1993). He started his research on Primates while working in Sri Lanka. His research papers were published in *Ceylon Journal of Science (B)* from 1932 onwards on *Veddhas*, loris and monkeys. These publications marked the beginning of his life's specialty, namely Primates.

While in Sri Lanka, he took a great interest in *Wildlife Protection Society of Ceylon* (as it was called then). Its Journal, *Loris* was first published in 1936 and he became its Co-Editor along with Dr R L Spittel for its first issue. He also worked on the Nittaeros, said to have been found at Kumana. Some people do not believe in the existence of the Nittaewos. Osman Hill called them "the unsolved problem" (Osman Hill, 1945).

Osman Hill left Sri Lanka in 1944 in order to work as a Reader in Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh. He remained there for 5 years and then took up the post of Prosector to the Zoological Society of London. Prosector is one who dissects prepared dead bodies for anatomy lectures. He held this post for 12 years, and then in 1962 he went to the USA as Assistant Director of Yerkes National Primate Research Center in Atlanta.

On leaving this place in 1969, Royal College of Surgeons of England made him the Hunterian Trustee. Royal Society of Edinburgh elected him a Fellow (FRS Edin) in 1955.

Ceylon Medical College was lucky to obtain his services, and also fortunate that Osman Hill began his famous research on Primates while in Sri Lanka. Among the primates examined by him were the loris and purple faced monkey-Osman Hill, 1932; 1933; 1934; 1942). He published 8 volumes of the series, *Primates: comparative anatomy and taxonomy* from 1953 to 1974. He died in 1975 before the final volume 9 was published.

***Dr. C.G Uragoda***
***Retired Consultant Chest Physician & Medical Historian***
***Past President, Sri Lanka Medical Association***

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# 1960 – Anatomy Days

It was April 1960, the season when all the land was bright and sunny, I was in the new batch of admissions to the Medical Faculty, Colombo, the ONLY Medical Faculty in the WHOLE of Ceylon of those days. The University of Ceylon had its Science and Engineering Faculty at Reid Avenue, Colombo 7, and there was the Faculty of Arts at Peradeniya.

We had sat for our Higher School Certificate exam. and completed the practical exams in Chemistry, Physics, Botany and Zoology at the University, Science Faculty in Colombo. Those who were successful were called for a 'Viva Voce' exam and the ones weeded out through the 'Viva' were admitted to the Medical Faculty. There was a one year Pre-University course in the Science Faculty at Reid Avenue, in earlier days. This had been whittled down to a six months course in each subject and three month courses in Organic Chemistry later. These periods of stay at the University Science Faculty, named the Pre-University year, were totally discontinued later.

We had as part of our Zoology studies in the HSC done dissections on the earthworm, the cockroach, the toad, the shark, and seen a dissection of a rabbit. We were thus not queasy about dissections on chloroformed specimens of animal life. Dissecting a dead, formalin preserved human body was another matter. That ordeal awaited us on entering the portals of the Department of Anatomy called 'The Block' at Francis road, Colombo 8. The fear and terror of an anticipated 'rag' by our 'Block Seniors' for the first fortnight mitigated the fear of contact of a corpse. The standard wear for a medical student was a white shirt and white longs. The 'freshers' were expected to wear in addition, black ties for the duration of the first two weeks of the 'rag'. A stern exterior and verbal abuse by the seniors was part of the treatment given to 'freshers'. Some of the male 'freshers' were sent on errands to go and propose marriage to individual female seniors. There was much laughter and fun but the 'freshers' were expected to keep a stern face. There was much ribbing and laughter but also help, given by the seniors to overcome our initial timidity. Bodies of humans prepared by injecting 'red lead' into the arterial system and by being immersed in 'formalin baths' for weeks were prepared for us for dissection. These 'bodies' were kept on individual tiled elevated concrete slabs. These awaited our attention.

After running the gauntlet of the scowling 'Block Seniors' at the entrance to the Anatomy building, each one of us got the name of the body partner assigned to him or her. Then we got the number of the 'body' on which one had to do the dissection. There were three dissecting halls namely 'A, B and C'. My dissecting partner was Vasanthanathan from Ananda College, Maradana. He was a quiet person with a good sense of humor. We two were to dissect the right upper limb on a body placed in the dissecting room 'C' where there were six bodies on slabs. I took the scalpel and forceps and Vasanthanathan started to read loud from 'Cunningham's dissecting manual for the upper and lower limbs'. Our first lesson was to isolate and demonstrate the cutaneous nerves of the upper limb. The task was full of humor. One had to get an eye to identify a nerve from the surrounding subcutaneous fat. Quite a few students cut the nerve and then only realized that they had ruined the field.

It was at the end of the first week that one felt slightly relaxed but the tension was still

there what with 'rag' and the dissections. This led to a 'signature' at the end of the fortnight. 'Signatures' called 'sigs' were verbal encounters with the 'Demonstrators' at which each student's progress was assessed. This was done in groups of eight to ten where a 'Demonstrator' or lecturer fired questions at each one in turn seated on stools in a circle, on the area dissected. The result was graded as 'repeat', 'unsatisfactory', ' satisfactory', 'fair' and 'good'. The idea was not to get a 'repeat or unsatisfactory'. Many fell by the wayside but picked up and carried on. End of the term had what was called a 'revisal' where the whole area dissected for the term say the upper limb, was covered.

It was during the end of the first week in the dissecting room 'C' that we had our first taste of humor. The seniors had gone for a lecture and we were silently doing our dissections. A group of girls from dissecting hall 'A' came visiting friends from the same school. A lean nattily dressed fresher promptly left his dissection and went to the entrance of the dissecting room. He bowed to the female 'freshers' bending low and said in a loud voice ' Ladies, you are welcome to our humble adobe'. Every one burst into laughter and the ladies who came visiting turned red in the face wondering whether to beat a hasty retreat. It was then that we realized that the 'welcomer' was the younger of the 'Jay Brothers' of the famous recording of the song 'Cherry blossom tree', both of whom were now 'freshers'. They were Perrin and Geri Jayasekara. There was never a dull day in the dissecting room with Geri around.

After the first fortnight the ragging came to an end. The 'out of bounds' common room could now be entered to enjoy a cup of tea or listen to music. The black ties came off and white shirt and white satin drill trousers became the standard ware for the males. One final item of the 'rag' remained. This was the 'body feed' where the 'freshers' dissecting a body gave a 'booze and dinner' outing to the seniors dissecting on the same body. We had our 'body feed' dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Bristol Street, Fort. It was a place where there was much caramederie and helpful advice given by the seniors.

One incident caused quite an uproar and laughter among our batch during dissecting hours. Viji Ponnambalam was a tall well built student. She had as a 'body partner' Piyasena, a lean gangly youth. While dissecting there had been an argument and Viji took the nearest long bone at hand, the human femur and hit Piyasena over the head with it. Piyasena fell down in a dead faint. Everyone gathered round and a sprinkling of water on the face brought Piyasena 'back to life'. Viji got the jitters and she was imagining her criminal lawyer father, Mr. G.G. Ponnambalam, defending her at a murder trial. Viji and Piyasena became good friends subsequently. About ten years ago they had met each other at an international airport while on transit. Viji recalled the incident to Piyasena at this airport and these two children of Mother Lanka, now resident in the USA, had a hearty laugh with their respective partners in life who happened to be present there.

Dr. Lester Jayawardena was a senior lecturer in Anatomy during our Block Days in 1960/61. In one of our signatures I remember him quizzing us on the anatomy of the middle ear. He told a student 'Imagine that you are seated on the floor of the middle ear facing anteriorly. Tell me what structures you would see on the wall on your left hand side?' This was too much imagination to the student who had crammed up 'Cunningham'. I ran into Lester when he conducted my Anatomy Viva for the Primary FRCS held in

Colombo. I answered all his questions on the dissected human body, identifying all of the structures he pointed at. He was proud to hear that I was one of his students. I later met Lester at Batticaloa in 1972, when I was Resident Surgeon at the General Hospital, Batticaloa. Lester had taken his Sabbatical leave to work at the Manthivu Leprosy Hospital. His quarters were on the mainland and he was taken by boat every day, to the Manthivu Island where the Leprosy hospital was situated. He invited me to come and see the various deformities caused by damage to the peripheral nerves by leprosy. He subsequently became the Professor of Anatomy in the Peradeniya Medical Faculty.

Dr. Navaratnam was another lecturer in anatomy who gave us a series of lectures on the anatomy of the posterior abdominal wall. He started by drawing the skeleton of the posterior abdominal wall. Then layer by layer he put on the various structures in the abdomen, till he reached the anterior wall of the peritoneum. This lesson was a landmark in my study of anatomy and stood the test of time during my years as a surgeon. Dr. Navaratnam later authored a popular text book on human anatomy while working in the UK.

Prof Chanmugam had retired by the time we entered the 'Block' but the stories relating to him lingered. It was claimed that he was kind to the students. At an exam he would hand over a LEFT femur with his LEFT hand to the student and start the questioning by asking 'Which side femur' is this?' It was also said that when he found that a student was performing very well he had a special test, to give the student distinction marks, if the student was successful at the test. He would already have a few carpal bones of the wrist in his trouser pocket. The student's hand would be guided into the Professor's trouser pocket. The student would be asked to identify say the 'scaphoid' bone by the feel of its shape and pick it out and show it.

The best story of Prof. Chanmugam was with a student named 'J' who failed anatomy repeatedly in the 2nd MB Finals. On the day of the repeat 2nd MB exam, student 'J' accompanied by his 'booze and poker' student friends appeared in white coat and tie for the exam. Prof. Chanmugam called 'J' in and a pregnant 20 minutes passed. At the end of this time a flustered 'J' came out red in the face and told his friends ' Machan this fellow 'Chanmu' knew that I was weak in anatomy. He gave me the toughest bone to identify and describe, the SPHENOID. I will not be able to pass this exam. Come let us go for a beer' and departed with a few commiserating friends. A few minutes later Prof. Chanmugam arrived and asked 'J's remaining friends 'Where is this fellow 'J'? I gave him the easiest bone to describe – the MANDIBLE – and he identifies it as the SPHENOID. How can I pass him?'

The tales could go on and on but the most striking thing was that the 'bodies' on which we dissected, knitted us very close to each other. Even now in our reunions the mention of the word 'body partner' carries a special relationship. The word 'Block' brings very emotional memories of our first days at the Medical College.

***"My yesterdays walk with me. They keep step, they are grey faces that peer over my shoulder." - William Golding***

***Dr. Philip G. Veerasingam, Retired Surgeon, NHSL, Colombo, Sri Lanka.***

# Life in the Anatomy Block Fifty Years Ago

Dressed in unusual attire as stipulated by the Block Seniors, I remember vividly the day I walked into the Anatomy Block for the first time in June 1962. White coat with a shoe flower in the button hole, a brinjal round the neck, a canvas shoe on one foot to go with a black leather shoe on the other, were part of our dress code during rag time that year.

I was assigned to a cadaver lying on a porcelain slab on my right as we entered the main dissecting room from the "T" shaped corridor leading from the main entrance. It was the still body of a dark skinned male whom I later learnt had been a beggar. Although there was no one to claim his body when he died, there were ten young medical students to keep him company during the ensuing three months. But there was hardly anything left of him at the end of this period except for the skeletal remains. The budding doctors who were studying human anatomy had seen to that!

Among my batch colleagues who worked on the same cadaver were Suriyankanthi Karunaratne Amarasekara (retired a few years ago as Senior Consultant Anaesthesiologist at Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital, H.N. Wickramasinghe (GP in Hanwella), R. Wickramasekaran (in USA) and Sunil Abeysuriya (in UK).

With Cunningham's Dissecting Manual in hand, we sat down on stools placed around our "body" and awaited instructions from one of our teachers. Thus began our career as medical students spending most of our time during the first two years within the grey walls of the Anatomy Block. We crossed Francis Road only to get to the nearby Physiology Block. We were allowed to visit the Common Room and canteen only after being "accepted" by the honourable seniors following the traditional rag in the first two weeks.

Life in the Block was not a walk in the park. We had to face the bi-weekly oral tests referred to as "Sigs" in students' jargon. They were conducted in small groups and based on the section of the body that had been dissected the previous fortnight. Successful students were signed up with comments such as "good", "fair" or "satisfactory", while the others had to repeat. Being new to the system, these "Sigs" were somewhat stressful. But they ensured that the students kept up with the study of human anatomy.

**Our Teachers**

In concluding this article, I wish to pay tribute to our teachers who helped us to take our first faltering steps. The Professor of Anatomy during my time was M.J. Waas who had followed a succession of illustrious academics namely Professors A. Gordon Smith, W.C. Osman Hill and P.K. Chanmugam. Since my own graduation in 1967, Professors F.L.W. (Lester) Jayawardene, P.S.S. Panditharatne and Rohan Jayasekara had ascended to the Chair. In the early sixties, Professor Waas was assisted by seniors such as Professor Chanmugam who continued to teach as Professor Emeritus even after retirement. Dr. Lester Jayawardene who was a Senior Lecturer spent a brief period in Colombo before accepting the Chair in Peradeniya. But he later returned to Colombo when Prof. Waas retired. Dr. Panditharatne who succeeded Prof. Jayawardene was a Senior Lecturer in 1962. Raja Bandaranayake (Professor and well known medical educationist in Australia)

and Shanthi Goonewardene (later to be Associate Professor in Anatomy), I believe had just joined the academic staff. The junior staff designated as "demonstrators" provided further teaching assistance. The demonstrators included P.A. Wirasinghe (now a Consultant Ophthalmologist), the late L.A.G. Jayasekara who was a Consultant Anaesthesiologist in UK, S. Dharmasekara (Medical Administrator) and Phyllis Costa Fernando (Consultant Surgeon).

Unlike today, with only two medical schools in operation at the time (the second Medical Faculty in Peradeniya had just got off the ground), we were fortunate to have the best medical talent available in the country to teach us. This applied not only to the non clinical subjects, but more so to the teaching in clinical fields which followed later in a student's career. Medical specialists in the government sector attached to teaching hospitals engaged in private practice even at that time. But teaching medical students was one of their priorities.

***Dr. Lakshman Abeyagunawardene***
(Block student June 1962 – December 1963)

# Reminiscences from the Sixties

It was perhaps aeons ago that our batch stepped in through the hallowed portal of the Anatomy Block of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo. That magical day was sometime in September 1965.

I do not think we even knew the meaning of the word anatomy, certainly not in the sense of what was in store for us. Five of us, two boys and three girls, the notorious 'P' Group, were shown to an elevated marble slab with a cadaver on it. The guy on the slab was as dry as an old bark, smelling to high heaven of pungent formalin and definitely very dead. On that first day, we were supposed to cut open the back of the chest to dissect out the large muscles of the back. Cunningham, the Bible for the dissectors, provided explicit instructions on exactly how to make the first incision. Mercifully, it was the back that needed to be cut and we did not have to look the cadaver straight in the eye. However, to cut up another human being at that time, to say the least, was quite repugnant.

All of us were taken aback at the prospect of putting a knife into this body. We stood looking at the unsuspecting cadaver for a long time. Finally, believe it or not, it was the physically smallest girl in the group, who managed to pluck up enough courage to make the first incision. It broke the ice and it was a little bit easier after that. That girl should have gone on to become a surgeon but she is a Consultant Physician now, looking after the welfare of the living in an Intensive Care Unit.

On the very first day itself, the Block Seniors advised us that the cutaneous nerves were the most important nerves in the human body and to go and ask the Demonstrators for a 'Cutanometer' to properly demarcate them in the cadaver. We did just that and the Demonstrators had a field day They called us all sorts of names implying that we were nincompoops. Later on we learnt that this was part of the '*rag*' and even the Demonstrators were joining in gamely !!!!

The first two weeks were spent dissecting in the Anatomy block and getting '*ragged',* at the same time. In the mornings around 7:30, walking gingerly to the Anatomy Block from Borella junction, wearing a white coat front to back and in white tennis shoes, we regularly heard the rasping shout from an Honourable Senior on a bicycle, '*run, you b.gg.r, run*', and we would run for dear life, all the way to the block. Sometimes the 'yakkos' from Aquinas College too would shout the same and we would run for that too. Even later on we could not find these culprits from Aquinas. If we did, they would probably have been lynched.

As a part of the rag, I was made to go round and count the number of girls in our batch. Eighteen years at the time, it had rather mixed connotations for me. It was certainly nice to go round and have a good look at them but was rather disconcerting to be treated as

their kid brother with absolutely no luck whatsoever in getting to know them a little better !!

Later on I even managed to smuggle out the human heart one day and took it home, just to study it in detail. There were these rather pretentious dreams of being a Cardiologist later on in life. The heart was promptly returned to its due abode the next day. Much later on, I had to shelve the fantasy of being a Cardiologist too.

The formidable Professor M.J. Waas, the Professor of Anatomy, ruled the roost. His witty, extremely sharp and biting remarks made us cringe and cower away on many an occasion. He used to regularly call the boys "Mister" and the girls "Miss", just to emphasise that we were still '*podians*' and not anything more than just that. He need not have bothered; we knew very well that years of hard work awaited us. However, he was an accomplished lecturer from whom we learnt a great deal.

In those early halcyon days, the Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and Demonstrators took turns to make us feel like things the cat brought in but later on took a lot of trouble to teach us. All those Demonstrators were studying for the Primary FRCS Examination, aspiring to be future surgeons. All of them crashed the exam while we were there!! Covertly though, we thought at that time, poetic justice perhaps for all the airs that they displayed.

One Senior Lecturer, Dr. V. Navaratnam, was an extraordinarily gifted, brilliant and marvellous teacher. He taught us Embryology and made it look ever so simple. He was also responsible for giving me a piece of advice which has stood me in good stead for the rest of my career. He took me for a Revisal Assessment at the end of the second term, on the anatomy of the abdomen. I was so confused and could not even blurt out the external macroscopic differences between the small intestine and the large intestine!!. He gave me a 'C'; a thoroughly undeserved 'C', barely passing me, and asked me to come to his office later.

When I went, he asked me "Why didn't you study?". My reply was "I studied a lot Sir". He asked "When?" The reply was "Last night Sir, I stayed up the whole night studying". He looked at me most benevolently and immediately grasped the core problem. He said "Son, do me a favour. Never ever do that again. For a person like you, you must close all books, 24 hours before an exam". I took those words of wisdom to heart and have done just that, ever since. The rest is history. I firmly believe that he saved my career and was responsible for my successes in examinations in later life.

We were there in the Anatomy Block for about 18 months and with the 2nd MB examination that stopover was over and done with. I for one would look back on that period as one where we were warmheartedly initiated into medicine. Many are the nostalgic memories of those early days but constraints of space do not permit me to chronicle all those remarkable memoirs. However, one beautiful incident in the Anatomy

Block was the appearance of a fair young lady in our junior batch in 1966, for whose hand I made a successful bid, quite a few years later.

Yet for all that water that has gone under the bridge, one thing is for sure. We remember with tremendous gratitude and affection our teachers in the Anatomy Block as those who laid a solid foundation for us. They were absolutely the best that we could ever have hoped for. In this centenary year of the Anatomy Block, we consider them to have been the colourful and golden threads that have weaved many an extraordinary career. In doing so, I am greatly privileged to echo the enduring words of Alexander the Great, "I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teachers for living well".

***Dr. B.J.C. Perera***

***MBBS(Cey), DCH(Cey), DCH(Eng), MD(Paed), FRCP(Edin), FRCP(Lon), FRCPCH(UK), FCCP, FSLCPaed, FCGP(SL)***

***Consultant Paediatrician and Honorary Senior Fellow,***

***Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka***

***President, Sri Lanka Medical Association***

# Never Learned Anatomy

Crossed Maradana Road and entered the Anatomy Block
Embracing Cunningham dissecting manual
Started dissecting upper limb, then came to the thorax
Oh! A cavity with a tiny little heart and two air filters on either side,
Filtering the unnecessary
Flourishing the heart with the breath of life

Never learned Anatomy,
Walked round dead bodies, kept on the dissecting tables.
Wondering "who he is?"
Wondering "who she is?"
No name,
No religion,
No way of identifying ethnicity,
No identity card

Oh! A HUMAN BEING, A HEART ON TWO LEGS.
Yes, really a heart on two legs.
Crying for dignity and respect.
Looking for compassionate people
Looking for people who can listen.

Crossed Francis Road to learn Physiology
Never heard "Lub Dub"

Crossed Kynsey Road to listen to them
Learned the difference between Healing and treatment
Learned the difference between Caring and curing
To become a member of a helping profession, a prestige profession
**'A Medical Doctor'**

**"Where there is love for mankind, there is love for the art of medicine"**
**-Hippocrates**

***Dr. Seeli Gunasekera (nee Pathirana)***
***76' Batch***

# Looking Back …… the Block Years

On a sunny morning of October 1982, 186 of us converged upon the area between the Pathology and Physiology blocks. Although we had different ideas, our principal aim was the same – to embark on the long trek which leads to the making of doctors. We thought that the Medical School was the paradise on earth. We were under the impression that we could get hold of that magnificent tool that fits into the two external auditory meati without difficulty, but the things that we experienced were much to the contrary. During the course of our first day in the *Block*, work gathered momentum like a rocket blasting into outer space. That afternoon, we stepped into the sanctified area of the Anatomy *Block* to start work on cadavers whose souls were happily or unhappily enjoying or suffering in heaven or hell. There were some medicos who turned out to be "ripe" dissectors on the first day itself. We were so astounded to hear terms like "pec major" and brachial plexus uttered by them.

I can remember how one of our guys gave a lecture on *vasa vasora* in the common room during our first few days in the *Block* and completely clueless about them in the second term! Typically a body group consisted of dissectors, criers, observers and wanderers. Dissectors were the serious lot who knew chapter and verse of the Holy *Cunningham's Manual* by heart and laid their gifted hands our greatest enigma – the human body. Some dissectors derived pleasure by anointing cadaveric fat on their extremities. Criers used to read our Holy *Manual* aloud so that the dissector and the observers can refresh their memories. Some of them did not know the substance of all what they read. Observers' job was to sit on stools and look and touch structures found by the maestro dissectors. Wanderers did not much stay near their cadavers, but they used to walk about in the dissecting rooms, looking at others' dissections and gathering and propagating all the gossip on earth.

At the end of each term, all of us used to team up to get ready for two important rituals – signatures and spots. Facing signatures was like going to the gallows to some of us, while some managed to sail through smoothly. Those anatomical exercises caused tachycardia, insomnia and other physiological phenomena in most of us.

Once a student was asked the point where the common bile duct ends, and she had answered that it ends at the gall bladder! Then the learned examiner has asked her whether the Mahaweli river ends at Adam's Peak! Then there was one amongst us who listed the prostate as a posterior relation of the vagina! Then there was the student who could not cover up the axillary region before the Signatures. Unfortunately he was tested on the structures in the axilla and he had failed to answer any of the questions. Then the examiner had quipped "You will get your MBBS minus the axilla!" There was another dissector who was cutting and digging to find the thoracic duct on the **right** side, until he was woken up from his anatomical hallucination by some onlookers.

These are some of the "lighter" incidents that flowed in my mind when I paused for a while to look back at our initial two years in the *Block*. May our nostalgic memories remain with us forever

**Dr. Satish Goonesinghe**
**Consultant Urological Surgeon**
**Teaching Hospital, Karapitiya**

*This account was written 28 years back in 1985 to the souvenir published to mark the* Ruhuna Rollick *– the farewell given to the students from the Ruhuna University who left Colombo after the 2nd MB. They were the last batch from Ruhuna to do their preclinical studies in Colombo. Thirty years on, we can still talk and reflect on our experiences in the* Block *filled with fear, suspense, fun, hilarity etc.*

*We wish to dedicate this account to the memory of two great teachers in Anatomy – the late Professor PSS Panditharatne, (Chair in Anatomy, University of Colombo 1976 – 1998) and the late Professor Darrel E Wijeratne. Professor Wijeratne was affectionately called as* Gulliver *by students.*

*It was the late Professor Panditharatne who made comments about the Mahaweli River and the getting the "MBBS minus the axilla". He was much loved, and respected by all of us. We still fondly remember his lecture on the anatomy of the posterior abdominal wall: a vividly illustrated tour done within an hour - the rapidity and depth were unfathomable to us then. His was a great academic colossus of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.*

# Through Invisible Eyes……

'Look everyone what I have found' one student shouted.

He had been dissecting meticulously for the last 15 minutes while his colleagues were chatting and reading.

'Is that the cystic duct that goes towards the gall bladder?' One girl asked.

Immediately all the 7 medical students of the group flocked around the body, peaking over each other's shoulders, attempting to have a better glimpse of the new finding all at the same time.

'No, I think it has to be the cystic artery.' The dissector answered.

'No, you can't be right. This does not come from the hepatic artery.' Argued another.

It was as they have found a precious stone after hours of mining. They all started to refer their dissection manuals and argue about my cystic duct or artery, whichever it was.

It is a little sad to see my body, or rather what used to be my body, cut open like that. I used to very health conscious. I made sure to groom and pamper myself very well too. Although now it lies motionless cold and rigid on a porcelain dissecting table emitting a strong smell of formalin.

Up above from the ceiling of the old Anatomy dissection hall, I can see many similar groups of young medical students trying hardly and even desperately to learn human Anatomy.

But, it seems there are others who are determined to have some fun as well.

'This subcutaneous fat looks exactly like butter.' One student commented while dissecting a body of a middle aged lady.

'Then you can have them on your toast for breakfast tomorrow' his friend replied.

'Before that, you should try some of these. You like chocolate ice cream. Don't you?' Answered the dissector pointing towards the brownish creamy liquid coming out from her stomach.

Although students made fun they were generally decent and respectful, except may be few.

I happened to notice something strange about my body. Something was missing. It was my right arm. Although the rest of the body had been dissected layer by layer, vessel by vessel, everything was there except my right arm. I am certain that I never had an arm amputation surgery done in my life. So where is it?

Across the corridor I could hear the sounds of a lecture. I entered over the old fashioned door where it proudly displayed the sign of Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre.

Inside it was like a magnificent Victorian theatre complex. There were several tiers of

circular racked wooden seating benches with a central stage at the base. These seats were occupied by about hundred medical students who were attentively listening to their lecturer. The lecturer carefully pointed a tiny muscle of my hand. My arm was lying on an old fashioned marble dissecting table positioned in the centre of the lecture theatre. He continued the lecture explaining in his clear sharp voice.

I wonder whether he would ever be able to teach so well without demonstrating on the real specimen of my hand. But, the students? Would they ever master human Anatomy as a subject just by studying coloured illustrations or plastic models? I certainly doubt. What might happen when they graduate as doctors? If one of them becomes an eminent surgeon, would he ever remember that I helped him to learn the alphabet? Isn't it the practice on me that makes him competent and confident? How about the patients? All those people, who recover from miraculous heart or brain surgeries and continue to live their lives to the fullest. Have not contributed to their success and happiness……I wonder…..!

***Dr. G. Nilupuli S. Mendis***
***Victoria, Australia***
***1999 A/L Batch***

# Appreciation for Mr. 27

I didn't like Anatomy so wasn't good at it, or maybe it was the other way around. As a result the Anatomy block wasn't exactly my favourite place to be at. But I did meet a most fascinating person during my time there so it wasn't all bad. I vividly remember my first meeting with Mr 27 and my immense pride at not passing out or throwing up as my "body mates" butchered him with gusto. My fear of being the laughing stock of the batch now over I began to think there might be a Doctor within me somewhere. Thank you for making me believe the impossible when everything else happening in those dark and confusing days made me think otherwise.

Still don't know why dissections start around the armpit. Nothing else in medicine starts there. No self-respecting doctor would initiate a consultation by poking a hand in an axilla, however relevant it may be. This was all very strange to me and I didn't have the confidence to ask why. Everyone else seemed to know and this made matters worse. All I knew was that Mr. 27 wouldn't like it. He was obviously a perfectionist and a very methodical person. After all when most of us are in denial about the inevitable he decided to make the necessary arrangements and plan his afterlife. Did he visit the Anatomy block to survey his final resting place like an Egyptian pharaoh marking out the site for a great pyramid? For someone whose sole purpose in life at the time was finding strategic positions to sit, in order to avoid being questioned, this level of planning for the future was unthinkable. Mr. 27 seemed to be telling me, plan ahead or you will be in this block forever.

Why did he do this? The obvious answer was to try and teach us about the human body so we could in turn take this knowledge to heal sick people. Mr. 27 was certainly optimistic. And selfless too, after all he couldn't witness or benefit from the good he intended to do. And forgiving as well, considering that if his doctors had done their job properly he wouldn't be in this awful predicament.

Sometimes my mind would play devil's advocate and think differently. Was he depressed and felt he had not helped anyone in life so might as well do something in death. Was he delusional and believed he would rise from the dead if cremation was avoided. Did he suffer from debilitating claustrophobia and couldn't stand the thought of being six feet under in a congested box?

In his presence I began to fully appreciate the wonder of life and think about the mystery of death for the first time. Was he looking down on us at this very moment? If so I hope he was a cricket fan and wouldn't disapprove of me leaving him early to watch Aravinda bat. Maybe he was a Casanova and amused by our feeble efforts at flirting and could have given us some much needed guidance on the matter. Or was he a stern and uncompromising professional who would be shaking his head in disapproval as the lecturers berated us for obvious reasons?

I will never know the answers but it doesn't matter. I'm sorry the Anatomy lesson didn't work, but you taught me much more and made me think of far more important things. And for this I am truly grateful Sir. Thank you.

***Dr Chamara Wijesinghe,***
***Lecturer in Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Ragama***

# Memories of the Anatomy Block

It was a warm November afternoon, the third day of the academic term, when we walked into the Anatomy block for the first time. Lofty weeping willows lined the building and framed the arched entrance. Shafts of sunlight filtered through the branches and dappled on our skin as we passed inside. Brand new dissection manuals and anatomy atlases were clasped in our hands and our shoes scuffed the polished cement floor as we timidly entered the dissection halls.

We called ourselves the "Millennium Batch". It sounds rather grandiose, but was apt since we qualified for entry at the advanced level exam held in the year 2000. When we entered, the Colombo Medical Faculty was dealing with an internal backlog, and there were 8 batches of students enrolled for the MBBS programme. Three batches were in the Introductory Basic Sciences Stream (IBSs) and we felt the last and the least among the legions of awe inspiring seniors.

Despite my lifelong desire to study medicine, the thought of dissecting a cadaver filled me with uneasiness. I did not want to disgrace myself on that first day, by fainting or throwing up. I reasoned with myself that it could not possibly be as bad as my imagination painted it… but finally came to the conclusion that a graded exposure was necessary. The day before we were scheduled to commence dissections, I crept towards hall A and peered inside, determined to get the worst over with. Imagine my horror when a door opened smartly behind me and Prof. Rohan Jayasekara demanded to know what exactly I was doing there! I squeaked an apology and fled, too terrified to appreciate his half smile and the twinkle in his eyes.

My group was allocated to hall B, a wide and spacious area that is sadly now no more. Tall pillars and wide arches supported the roof and were evidence of the solid colonial architecture. The walls were painted a bilious green and narrow drains with wrought iron covers ran across the grey cement floor. Dim light filtered in through the skylights 20 feet above and the strong odour of formaldehyde filled the air.

Each group was allocated a cadaver, and we clustered sheepishly at the foot of the dissecting table, wondering what to do. The seniors were dissecting the neck, and supremely indifferent to our presence. This changed when my batch-mates started reacting to the experience. Three (all of them boys) became dizzy and faintish and had to be escorted to seats and vigorously fanned. It was the girls who ran to the canteen to bring sustenance in the form of ginger beer and lemonade. After this "icebreaker", conversation started to flow. We introduced ourselves - the senior and junior "body groups"- got some advice on how to hold the scalpel and started by dissecting the upper limb.

Thus began a happy 15 months at the Anatomy block. We soon grew accustomed to the dim light, the sight of the wizened cadavers and the chemical smell of formaldehyde and cheap rubber gloves. Except for occasional practicals in histology, physiology and biochemistry, most afternoons were spent poring over Cunningham's dissection manual and wondering if the structure held between the forceps was a vein, artery or nerve.

Every Friday large buckets of formaldehyde were brought in and each group carefully sloshed "their" cadaver to prevent the growth of a fuzzy white fungus.

That large hall housed half the batch and we moved between groups, checking to see how far the others had gone, socializing and, after a while, even sharing *jambu*, *rambutan* and *gal siyambala*. The large hall echoed with laughter whenever someone cracked a joke, and even ordinary conversation was somewhat amplified. Those seeking a bit of peace and quiet – especially the couples – went down the short corridor to the Anatomy museum, which remains one of the finest in Sri Lanka.

With three batches in the same stream, we were woefully short of space, and were not welcome in the "super senior" study areas such as the common room, library and the "Washington". So we found our own nooks and crannies. Some clustered on the steps leading to the dissection rooms, some made use of the summer huts and others studied in the wide car porch at the rear entrance. My friends and I often compared notes while perched on a low wall under the large yet low growing *Hamelia* tree, which was always covered with clusters of crimson flowers.

Time flew by and soon we were seniors, lording it over the hapless newcomers, and with access to the "prime" study areas. The IBSS main exam was hurdled and we proceeded across Francis road, to the main block and further still, across Kynsey road, to NHSL.

Where are we now, we of the "Millennium Batch"? Some are in rigorous postgraduate training, others faithfully serve communities in rural areas, and still others work equally hard in crowded urban hospitals. Some have migrated and a few have joined academia. More than a decade has gone by, yet wherever we are, I'm sure each of us carries warm memories of the Anatomy block and treasures the lessons learnt within its hallowed walls.

***Dr. Ashwini de Abrew***
***2000 A/L Batch***
***Lecturer, Medical Education Development and Research Centre (MEDARC),***
***Faculty of Medicine, Colombo***

# Back to the future

The millennium year was special for 200 excited school leavers, myself included, not because the computer programmers forgot to include two extra digits and we were heading for a possible computer crash, but rather it was the year we received eligibility to enter the Colombo Medical Faculty, a special crash landing in itself. The millennium batch was special for all the good reasons; it had more females than males, a first in the history of the Faculty and was therefore at times called the estrogen batch. It had a lengthy overlap with seniors, approximately 6 months, resulting in a great deal of happiness I believe…..But most of all it was special for all the great people from which it was created.

Excluded from entering the student common room and the library, the Anatomy Block was our sole domain, our safe haven. Most days of the week the three hours following lunch were spent amidst the cadavers of the dissection hall. The batch was divided for the two dissection halls and further into eight for each body. On the first day we gathered around the body, our arms folded and wondering, what next? However with time we were dissecting with gusto, indeed at times the excessive enthusiasm with the scalpel resulting in us having to dig in the refuse bucket to identify chopped off nerves and vessels. Our anatomy text books are forever stained by muck covered gloves turning pages trying to demystify what exactly we had unearthed. The result of which usually was the unanimous decision our cadaver had alien origins.

Following a decade spent away from the Block, I have now returned to teach at the same place that was my safe haven at the beginning of the millennium. Life has it seems turned a full circle and I now teach at the Department that taught me the building blocks of my medical career. I see students huddled over their own cadavers, noses stuck deep inside the open abdominal cavities and I get flashbacks. I see them screwing up both eyes over histology microscopes and feel myself getting cross eyed. I hear them debate which nerve goes over which artery and I hear echoes of years gone by. The Block is a special time, place and chapter in every medical student's life. It brings with it a kaleidoscope of experiences, at times tough and overburdening and at times rich with excitement and drama. Very much a student myself, I hope the years to come continues to bring myself and all students that enter the youthful excitement, awe and curiosity to learn it has shown to create year after year for the past 100 years……..

***Dr Dulika Sumathipala***
***A/L 2000 Batch***
***Lecturer, Department of Anatomy***
***Faculty of Medicine, Colombo***

# Life in the Beloved 'Block'

As the Anatomy building of the Colombo Medical Faculty marks 100 years in November, Kumudini Hettiarachchi recounts the special place it holds in the journey of a medical student:

The entries in the book are meticulous as well as handwritten beautifully.

A random page reveals……"Dissected lower extremity, dissected upper extremity, dissected head & neck, dissected trunk."

This entry in a ledger 100 years old just like the building it's being kept at, interestingly records the passage of none other than Sir Nicholas Attygalle, eminent Academic, Surgeon and Senator, through what medical students call their beloved 'Block'. With a page for each and every medical student who passed through its portals then, the one for 'Mr. N. Attygalle' states clearly, "Passed anat & phys March 1917".

Anatomy building: The place where new medical students meet en masse for the first time.

Picture by M.A. Pushpa Kumara

Although the record-keeping has changed over the years and the ledger is now history, the Anatomy Block which has already begun its centenary celebrations, ahead of its anniversary on November 3 (2013), remains the very heart of the Colombo Medical Faculty.

The Block stands apart on Francis Road, behind the cluster of buildings which forms the Medical Faculty.

It is one of only two old buildings, though renovated to overcome the onslaught of the weather, but keeping the façade intact. The other is the Koch Memorial Clock Tower, built in memory of the Medical School's second Principal, Dr. E.L. Koch in 1881. The Medical Faculty had its beginnings in 1870 and is believed to be the second oldest in South Asia, after the Bengal Medical College, India.

The Block as the anatomy building is fondly called is where new medical students meet en masse for the first time, the Dean of the Colombo Medical Faculty, Prof. Rohan Jayasekara who is also Senior Professor of Anatomy tells the Sunday Times, while Ordinary and Advanced Level students are led on a journey through the human body elsewhere in the same building.

Writings from the past: A page for each student

Speculating why it is referred to as the 'Block', Prof. Jayasekara says the first hurdle or block the students have to overcome is the 2nd MBBS examination.

"You are given only four attempts, after which you have to leave medical school," says Prof. Jayasekara who has seen many a medical giant pass through.

The events associated with the Anatomy building were many, the Sunday Times learns, with Block concerts and 'Block Nites' with 'Block Queens' every year.

Earlier the building was known as 'Block' and the festivities as 'Block Night' but over the years it had changed into the shorter versions.

Block life is unique, according to him, with all new entrants to the Medical Faculty whatever strata, economic, social or religious background, coming together as one. Walking into the Block as individuals, within its fold, they would move and mix as one undisturbed batch, in the olden days for five terms (1½ years) and now under the new curriculum for three.

Once they get past the 2nd MBBS "block", leaving the Block behind, they would be divided into clinical groups, with the batch concept being there only at lectures.

The culture of the Block is that the students in small groups of 4-6 are allocated a body or cadaver, after which they would become a "family unit".

Here in this historic building young men and women aspiring to be doctors get a "close look" at both the inside and the outside of the human body.

Within their own group, some would dissect the body, others would read from the texts, in a division of labour, laughs Prof. Jayasekara, while still others would snore. On Friday the dissections would be completed, followed by an oral test on Monday. Some students would keep their eyes glued to the body but others would just put their nose in only on Friday.

Most of the top surgeons would have got a flavour here of the work they would do later, he says, adding that in those days there would be no gloves, but bare hands would be used.

For many, the Block is characterised not by the stench or the smell but the "odour" of a

mixture of formalin, glycerine and preservative fluid, says Prof. Jayasekara. This odour would be persistent even when the students boarded buses or trains to get back home, drawing looks of disgust. Now, however, there is no odour.

There were also the pranks, the Sunday Times understands. After boarding a bus, when pretty medical students dipped their hands into the bags to get the coins for their fare, their fingers would come across a part of the human body, surreptitiously put in there by the lads. There would be no bounds to the wrath of the girls the next day, when they met their batch-mates.

Some of them would also be told to check out a cadaver and on pulling off the covering would yell out a terrified scream when it sat up. A medico substituted for the cadaver!

The pranks are no more and before the cadavers are brought before their eyes, they are not only given an orientation but also a pep talk on how to respect the bodies by the Head of the Department of Anatomy and Consultant Eye Surgeon, Dr. Madhuwanthi Dissanayake. Now religious ceremonies are held annually in thanksgiving to those who have donated their bodies and also their relatives.

Dr. Dissanayake believes that around 143 batches would have passed through the hallowed halls of the Block, since it was opened by Governor Robert Chalmers. They learn the bare bones of medicine--–the structure of the human body at the Block.

As a cadaver is kept on the table and students gather round, it may come as a psychological shock, she concedes, but hastens to add that it prepares a medical student to face any situation. From this year, there are group leaders who will be the 'Body Father' and 'Body Mother' to take good care of the cadaver.

Meanwhile, stressing that the Block is "100 years young", Prof. Jayasekara says that when thinking of the centenary celebrations they wanted to engage in "institutional social responsibility" and through the exhibition entice students to take to the study of human biology and medicine.

As the Block is on the threshold of the next 100 years, Prof. Jayasekara and his team hope to strengthen the research aspects of regenerative medicine.

***Kumudini Hettiarachchi***
***Deputy Editor (News Features)***
***The Sunday Times***

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***The Sunday Times: Plus***
***Sunday, August 04, 2013***

# A Tribute

In search of Hippocrates
In the labyrinth of the varsity,
We set off in our spring
Amidst the blessings of our beloveds.

Evading the horrors of seniors,
When stepped into Anatomy,
A line of Cadavers in mist
Welcomed us in silence.

In the attempt of understanding
The lingo of Cunningham,
We found them kind souls
Who wished fellow beings Good Health!

After leaving their realm,
Have we forgotten their sacrifice?
Or isn't the time yet ripe,
To pay them their due tribute?

***Dr. A. Dayapala***
***Consultant JMO, District General Hospital, Negombo***

# The Dissections

## Back Then...

*Pictures courtesy of Dr. Deepanee Wewalwala (1984)*

## And Now...

## Students of the Block Centenary Year - Small Group Activities being Conducted at the Anatomy Resource Room & Museum

# ‘Journey through the Human body’
# An Educational Workshop

The building housing the Department of Anatomy is commemorating 100 years in 2013. An Educational workshop organized as part of the Anatomy Block Centenary Commemoration Project was successfully held from 29th July to 3rd August 2013. This workshop catered to over 3500 students from both government and private schools in the Colombo district. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the support extended by the university staff, the students and well-wishers to make this endeavor a success.

***Opening ceremony of the Educational Workshop - 29th August 2013***

## 'Journey through the Human body' - An Educational Workshop


***Faculty staff at the Educational Workshop***

## 'Journey through the Human body' - An Educational Workshop

### *Nervous System*

### *Cardiovascular System*

### *Respiratory System*

## 'Journey through the Human body' - An Educational Workshop.....*cont'd*

### *Gastrointestinal System*

### *Genitourinary System*

### *Musculoskeletal System*

## *Special Senses*

## *Genetics*



## THE LIST OF BLOCK CENTENARY YEAR STUDENTS WHO CONDUCTED

## THE EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP 'JOURNEY THROUGH THE HUMAN BODY'

**CARDIOVASCULAR & RESPIRATORY SYSTEMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/607 | LOKUSOORIYA, T D |
| MFC/AL/2011/608 | MADARA, T A T |
| MFC/AL/2011/611 | MADDUMAGE, M K N S |
| MFC/AL/2011/609 | MADHAWA, J K G |
| MFC/AL/2011/610 | MADHUSHANI, M L N |
| MFC/AL/2011/612 | MADURAPPERUMA, M C P |
| MFC/AL/2011/615 | MANCHANAYAKE, L D |
| MFC/AL/2011/616 | MEDANI, D W A |
| MFC/AL/2011/617 | MEDHAVI, G M |
| MFC/AL/2011/618 | MUNASINGHE, M A K S |
| MFC/AL/2011/619 | NAYANATHARA, K A S |
| MFC/AL/2011/622 | NUZNA, A M N F |
| MFC/AL/2011/623 | ORUTHOTAARACHCHI, T S |
| MFC/AL/2011/624 | PATHIRANA, L P D N |
| MFC/AL/2011/627 | PERERA, H A A M |
| MFC/AL/2011/629 | PERERA, WHN |
| MFC/AL/2011/631 | PREMATHILAKA, I M |
| MFC/AL/2011/632 | PREMATHILAKA, B A K P |
| MFC/AL/2011/643 | RUWANPATHIRANA, P S |
| MFC/AL/2011/645 | SAMPATH, B M P |
| MFC/AL/2011/647 | SANDARUWAN, B A M |
| MFC/AL/2011/648 | SANDARUWAN, W K L |
| MFC/AL/2011/650 | SANJAYAN, A |
| MFC/AL/2011/651 | SAPUKOTANA, S A |
| MFC/AL/2011/653 | SARATHCHANDRA, D N S |
| MFC/AL/2011/655 | SENADHEERA, S A L P |
| MFC/AL/2011/658 | SENEVIRATHNA, Y H |
| MFC/AL/2011/660 | SHAGEEVAN, S |
| MFC/AL/2011/667 | SILVA, L A N |
| MFC/AL/2011/669 | SILVESTAN, M J |
| MFC/AL/2011/674 | SITHARA, J S |
| MFC/AL/2011/680 | SUMATHIPALA, R P A P |
| MFC/AL/2011/681 | SUMINDA, S D H |
| MFC/AL/2011/682 | SUNILCHANDRA, N P U N |
| MFC/AL/2011/684 | THUSEEPAN, S |
| MFC/AL/2011/685 | UDAYANGA, W L G S |
| MFC/AL/2011/686 | UMAYANGANA, M P |
| MFC/AL/2011/688 | VAROTHAYAN, S |
| MFC/AL/2011/689 | VIDANAPATHIRANA, M N |
| MFC/AL/2011/690 | VILOCHANI, D C |
| MFC/AL/2011/691 | WASANA, R A T |
| MFC/AL/2011/692 | WEERARATHNA, W W H M |
| MFC/AL/2011/693 | WEERASINGHE, W C H |
| MFC/AL/2011/694 | WEERASURIYA, G G |
| MFC/AL/2011/695 | WELAGEDARA, A B T M S B |
| MFC/AL/2011/696 | WICKRAMAARACHCHI, W A Y |
| MFC/AL/2011/697 | WIJERATHNE, P P B |
| MFC/AL/2011/698 | WIJESENA, K D R S |
| MFC/AL/2011/699 | WIJESINGHE, W M S M |
| MFC/AL/2011/700 | WIJETHILAKE, H E D |
| MFC/AL/2011/701 | WIJEWARDENA, C K |

**GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/501 | ABEYRATHNA, T M D T |
| MFC/AL/2011/502 | ABEYRATNE, M A D S N |
| MFC/AL/2011/503 | ABEYSINGHE, B A M N W |
| MFC/AL/2011/505 | ALAHAKOON, A H M M I |
| MFC/AL/2011/507 | AMANDA, G W H |
| MFC/AL/2011/509 | BALASURIYA, C D |
| MFC/AL/2011/511 | BANDARA, G B K D |
| MFC/AL/2011/512 | BANDARA, H M D J |
| MFC/AL/2011/513 | BANDARA, H M P H |
| MFC/AL/2011/514 | BANDARA, P K B U C |
| MFC/AL/2011/518 | BASNAYAKE, N L |
| MFC/AL/2011/523 | CHATHURANGA, W A T |
| MFC/AL/2011/524 | CHINTHAKA, W M C |
| MFC/AL/2011/525 | DADIGAMUWAGE, S D |
| MFC/AL/2011/526 | DAHANAYAKE, D P C S |
| MFC/AL/2011/527 | DAHANAYAKE, D V K |
| MFC/AL/2011/528 | DAYARATHNA, I D B A |
| MFC/AL/2011/529 | DAYARATNE, M U |
| MFC/AL/2011/530 | DE SILVA, B R |
| MFC/AL/2011/531 | DE SILVA, D V A S |
| MFC/AL/2011/533 | DE SILVA, I P |
| MFC/AL/2011/534 | DE SILVA, W V D |
| MFC/AL/2011/535 | DEVASIRI, L |
| MFC/AL/2011/661 | SHARADA, G D K |
| MFC/AL/2011/662 | SHASHIPRABHA, P A D |
| MFC/AL/2011/663 | SHEETH, M J S |
| MFC/AL/2011/664 | SHEHARA, U R |
| MFC/AL/2011/670 | SINTHUGAN, S |
| MFC/AL/2011/676 | SOMARATHNA, H P S H |
| MFC/AL/2011/677 | SOOREAKUMAR, A |
| MFC/AL/2011/678 | SUBASINGHE, S M T N |

**GENITOURINARY SYSTEM**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/571 | ILLANGAKOON, H U |
| MFC/AL/2011/572 | JAYAKODI, J A M A D |
| MFC/AL/2011/574 | JAYARATHNE, A H M S S S |
| MFC/AL/2011/575 | JAYARATHNE, D K D |
| MFC/AL/2011/576 | JAYASEKERA, D |
| MFC/AL/2011/577 | JAYASINGHE, L H G |
| MFC/AL/2011/578 | JAYASUNDARA, W K R S |
| MFC/AL/2011/580 | JAYAWARDENA, G D C H |
| MFC/AL/2011/582 | KALUARACHCHI, K I S |
| MFC/AL/2011/583 | KANAKARATNE, Y B D S |
| MFC/AL/2011/584 | KANDANAARACHCHI, S S |
| MFC/AL/2011/585 | KARUNANAYAKA, K P S P |
| MFC/AL/2011/586 | KARUNASIRI, M H V M |
| MFC/AL/2011/587 | KARUNATHILAKA, D D D J |
| MFC/AL/2011/588 | KARUNATHILLEKE, V S S |
| MFC/AL/2011/589 | KAVIRATHNA, P M |
| MFC/AL/2011/590 | KIRUSHANTH, S |
| MFC/AL/2011/591 | KODITHUWAKKU, C N |
| MFC/AL/2011/592 | KODITHUWAKKU, L H P |
| MFC/AL/2011/593 | KOKULAN, T |
| MFC/AL/2011/594 | KUMARA, H A R A |
| MFC/AL/2011/595 | KUMARA, P S P S |
| MFC/AL/2011/596 | KUMARADASA, A W N H |
| MFC/AL/2011/597 | KUMARAWANSHA, P G K M |
| MFC/AL/2011/598 | KURUPPU, K A R L |
| MFC/AL/2011/599 | KURUPPU ARACHCHI, K A P |
| MFC/AL/2011/601 | LAKMALI, V G D |
| MFC/AL/2011/602 | LANKASHINI, M S |
| MFC/AL/2011/603 | LENAGALA, S A K |
| MFC/AL/2011/604 | LIYANAGE, A L R P |
| MFC/AL/2011/605 | LIYANAGE, A N |
| MFC/AL/2011/606 | LIYANAGE, C K |
| MFC/AL/2011/675 | SIVARASA, K |

## THE LIST OF BLOCK CENTENARY YEAR STUDENTS WHO CONDUCTED THE EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP 'JOURNEY THROUGH THE HUMAN BODY'

**MUSCULO-SKELETAL SYSTEM**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/614 | MADUSHANKA, E P N |
| MFC/AL/2011/626 | PEIRIS, K A D M |
| MFC/AL/2011/628 | PERERA, R N A |
| MFC/AL/2011/630 | REMARATHNE, Y D G |
| MFC/AL/2011/633 | PUNCHIHEWA, H G |
| MFC/AL/2011/634 | RAJAGURU, R P A N T |
| MFC/AL/2011/635 | RAJENDRAN, L A S |
| MFC/AL/2011/636 | RANASINGHA, W M K I |
| MFC/AL/2011/637 | RANATHUNGA, K C |
| MFC/AL/2011/638 | RANAWAKA, E A R |
| MFC/AL/2011/639 | RANAWEERA, S S H |
| MFC/AL/2011/640 | RATNASOORIYA, C D T |
| MFC/AL/2011/641 | RILVAN, F S |
| MFC/AL/2011/642 | RODRIGO, P D M |
| MFC/AL/2011/656 | SENANAYAKA, H R U D |
| MFC/AL/2011/657 | SENERATH YAPA, D J |

**NERVOUS SYSTEM**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/553 | GUNARATHNA, H P S M |
| MFC/AL/2011/554 | GUNARATHNA, M D C S |
| MFC/AL/2011/555 | GUNARATHNA, M J C |
| MFC/AL/2011/556 | GUNARATHNA, M R T N |
| MFC/AL/2011/557 | GUNARATHNA, W B A I |
| MFC/AL/2011/560 | GUNASEKARA, L K C |
| MFC/AL/2011/561 | GUNATHILAKA, L A T D |
| MFC/AL/2011/562 | GUNAWARDANA, G E K A |
| MFC/AL/2011/563 | GUNEWARDANA, B M |
| MFC/AL/2011/564 | GURUSINGHE, S R |
| MFC/AL/2011/565 | HALIDHA, M S F |
| MFC/AL/2011/566 | HANSIKA, U H D |
| MFC/AL/2011/567 | HATHURUSINGHA, H M K M |
| MFC/AL/2011/568 | HEMANTHA, P V |
| MFC/AL/2011/569 | HEWAARACHCHI, H T A S S |
| MFC/AL/2011/570 | ILANGAKOON, I A N S |

**SPECIAL SENSES**

| | |
|---|---|
| MFC/AL/2011/536 | DHARMAWARDANA, D D L P |
| MFC/AL/2011/537 | DHARMAWARDENA, C |
| MFC/AL/2011/538 | DIAS, H C R(MISS) |
| MFC/AL/2011/539 | DISSANAYAKA, B M M D |
| MFC/AL/2011/540 | DISSANAYAKE, S A D P C |
| MFC/AL/2011/541 | EKANAYAKE, S L S |
| MFC/AL/2011/542 | EPA, H S |
| MFC/AL/2011/544 | ESHWARAGE, K S |
| MFC/AL/2011/545 | FERNANDO, H S D |
| MFC/AL/2011/546 | FERNANDO, W R C |
| MFC/AL/2011/547 | GAJANAYAKE, H K |
| MFC/AL/2011/548 | GAJANAYAKE, I S |
| MFC/AL/2011/549 | GAMAGE, R S |
| MFC/AL/2011/550 | GAMAGE, Y D |
| MFC/AL/2011/552 | GOMEZ, D M |

**MSc CLINICAL GENETICS**

| | |
|---|---|
| FM/CG/02/01 | WANIGASEKARA, T D |
| FM/CG/02/02 | JAYAWARDANA, S M A |
| FM/CG/02/03 | SAMUDITHA, S L D |
| FM/CG/02/05 | DISSANAYAKE, N D W |
| FM/CG/02/08 | WEERAPPERUMA, K N D |

**MSc GENETIC DIAGNOSTICS**

| | |
|---|---|
| FM/GD/02/01 | THIRUKESWARAN, S |
| FM/GD/02/08 | JEERASINGHE, P B |
| FM/GD/02/10 | GODAPITIYA, I U H |
| FM/GD/02/11 | GUNATHILAKE, K M D |
| FM/GD/02/13 | SOMADASA, P K D C T |
| FM/GD/02/20 | KULATHUNGA, L A N |
| FM/GD/02/22 | SRISAIYINI, K |
| FM/GD/02/24 | GAUTAM, B |
| FM/GD/02/25 | BANSTOLA, SR |

***We express our sincere appreciation for the support extended towards the 'Journey through the Human Body' Educational Workshop by***

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# Anatomy 'Block' – Lessons Learnt & Experience

The subject of Human Anatomy which has roots extending up to 1600 BC, is one of the first subjects learnt by any medical student anywhere in the world. As students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, we also learn Anatomy in the Department of Anatomy which is situated in a 100 year old building known to all as the “block”. Senior students and distinguished alumni of the faculty all agree with one thing in common, and that is the fact that the 'block' is a memorable place. But what makes it so memorable? Is it the subject Anatomy? or dissections? One of these may be the reason for some people but it is a known fact that everybody does not like Anatomy and dissections. So what makes this 'block' so memorable if it is not those two reasons? It is the experience gained inside it and the lessons learnt other than the subject of Anatomy. I will use this opportunity to highlight some of these lessons and experiences as a first year medical student.

When we first entered the faculty, we got to know form our Dean, the current Senior Professor of Anatomy, that they have decided to reintroduce dissections and that we will have the opportunity to dissect. It generated mixed emotions but mostly it was excitement. When we first entered the dissection hall, the smell of the formalin fumes was unbearable and the sight of cadavers lying on trolleys was not a pleasant sight for the highly sensitive students. But during the course of a couple of weeks or so, the smell was not at all noticed, since our noses got adapted and it alone was quite an experience. Also, when students got the first hand experience of dealing with the dead, they got desensitized and even the most sensitive students handled parts of the human body such as heart, lungs, muscles, intestines etc. naturally. Where can you gain this type of experience other than from the 'block'?

The 'block' is the place where future surgeons will make their first cut using a scalpel, without the fear of losing one’s life. It is the place where you have the opportunity to touch, feel and learn about the parts of the human body. It is the place where one can think about the ultimate destiny lying in front of us, death. It is the place where some students had the opportunity of tasting adipose tissue (unwillingly by accident of course), it is the place where all the students whether they like dissections or not get around a body to try and identify certain structures, especially when they get the idea that it can be a probable 'spot'.

To mention the lessons learnt in the block other than Anatomy, the most important one is about “Respect”. Medical professionals from professors, consultants to the most junior doctor should know how to respect the patients they are treating irrespective of their social status, religion, race, cast etc.

Students from the Colombo Medical Faculty are well known for showing this great personal quality. It is in the 'block' where students learn this by means of respecting the cadavers although it is an emotionless, dead body. The lecturers and the demonstrators of the Anatomy Department taught us the importance of respecting the cadavers from the very first day by making us realize what a sacrifice and gift that the owners of these

bodies have given to us in order for us to learn Anatomy and to become good doctors, because all of us know the importance of doing dissections since seeing illustrations, diagrams or even previously dissected specimens is not as efficient as dissecting by yourself in learning Anatomy.

So what makes the 'block' so memorable other than learning Anatomy? I hope you got the answer now.

***C.D.T. Ratnasooriya***

# Dashboard Confessional: "The Vehicle of Anatomy"

For those prestigious and fortunate few who receive letters of admittance to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, life as an undergraduate is a time that requires great patience, sacrifice, dedication and hard work that only those who are and have been through the system are capable of comprehending. And with it the inevitable doubts and questions on how one would settle into and adapt to an educational system that is far different from what one is accustomed to. Also above it blooms the stories one hears about the "First Year" which is thought to be tough on many, mainly due to difficulties in blending into a more professional, self-learner oriented setting.

The 'Department of Anatomy', widely considered to be the best department in the Faculty, for reasons that are apparently apparent, is also home to the 'Vehicle of Anatomy', the core in the study of medicine and the most essential for the manufacture of competent professionals. The folklore surrounding the subject though is that it is the most difficult subject in the first calendar year, thus naturally exuding an aura of intimidation to every single one of us that step into the 'Block'.

When walking in to the Block, the 1913 written above your head is a constant reminder of the many generations of individuals that have passed through these doors and how abundantly blessed we are to do the same. The wide corridors, the dark tiling, the offices on either side, the portraits of the many 'greats' may be, but it is the formaldehyde vapour that is most signatory as a site of the study of Anatomy.

Life in the Block for a first year student can be basically summed up into a few weekly activities comprising of 'Small Group Activities', histology practicals, and the dreaded 'Weekly Review'. It may seem boring and sound easy, but those few who know, know that it's a lot more than that.

Monday marks the day when the notice board outside the dissection hall gets bombarded with heaps of enthusiastic students eagerly taking down the questions of the review or the less eager ones simply snapping them. Witt the reading material given, the work load is then distributed over the next few days in a manner that makes one best prepared for

the review in their own style. Some read and write, some read and understand, some remember, and those few brilliant ones, well they don't even have to read.

Tuesday and Wednesday simply pass through like the sea breeze, one feels it, one hears it, but you don't see it coming and don't see it going. Thursday on the other hand is game on, a race against time to finish reading and studying and discussing the related issues with regards to the review within ones own body group or simply as peers.

All would agree that Friday is the worst day of the week, due to logically apparent reasons. The morning begins with a prayer to the higher powers to be asked a question from what one has hopefully studied. During the review, staying alert and paying close attention is key, because drifting off is an offense that would cause one to get bombarded with questions, and one could either be a 'phoenix' and resurrect from the ash or be simply blown away. But smart as we are, after a few weeks, patterns in the manner in which the questions are asked are identified, whether its an arch starting from the left, or in numerical order etc., and a pre-review discussion occurs to organise the seating arrangement depending on ones strengths and weaknesses. Just as we think we have figured it out, on that very day the entropy of the system is unintentionally or intentionally and exponentially elevated, and instantaneously the entire room of students wished they had prayed for an invisibility cloak.

Histology, unless ones aim is to be a histopathologist is what is generally considered to be quite boring. On the first day all that can be identified through the microscope are blue dots and red dots i.e. nuclei and cytoplasm; but thenceforth with proceeding weeks, the accommodation of the eye to H&E basically filters out the material to be observed thus surprisingly giving a certain level of satisfaction. However, yet, the phrase, "I cannot identify a damn thing" or "why can't it look exactly like the book" is a common eventuality.

Anatomy is the foundation upon which every doctor is built upon. It is the study of what is right in front of you, no theories, principles, ideas, concepts, nor imagination. The purely factual nature also makes it subjective to various opinions, but the core remains the same. Studying Anatomy is an experience like none other. It is difficult, it is stressful but the logical nature of it makes it highly interesting to learn and enjoyable. The road of Anatomy is a tough trek, one requires a good vehicle and a good driver. The manner in which one reaches the summit is variable and everyone has a confession to make somewhere along the line.

***Deshan Gomez***

# Anatomy of the Anatomy Block

"Anatomy Block" the oldest, functional building of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo deserves to be known as "The Heart of The Faculty". The building is cuboid in shape and as such, has a rectangular base, four rectangular walls and a rough waved roof.

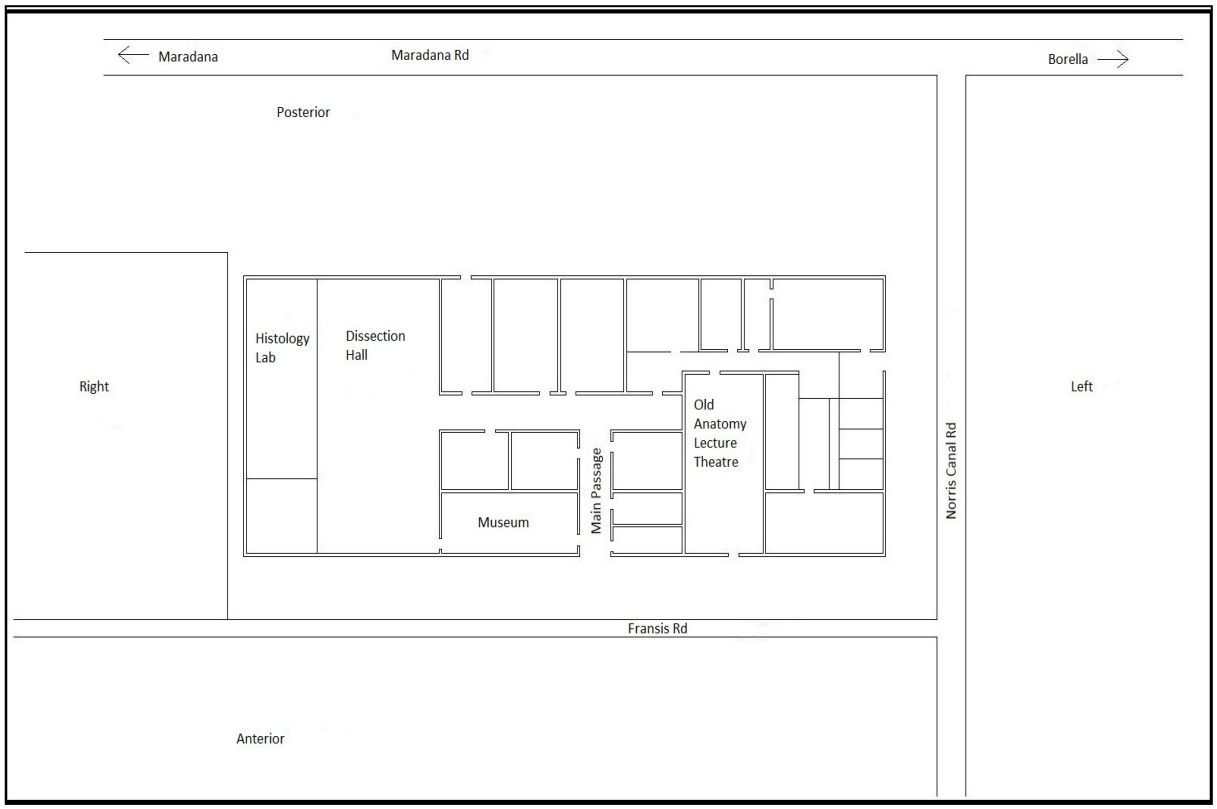


*Fig: The layout of The Anatomy Block (This is not drawn to scale)*

The Anatomy Block is bounded anteriorly by Francis Road which separates the building from the Faculty premises. Laterally, on the left side is Norris Canal Road which connects Maradana Road to Kynsey Road. Posteriorly, Maradana Road is separated from the block by an empty area which has the potential to be used in functions of the Department of Anatomy. Laterally, on the right side, the block is closely related to the office of Judicial Medical Officer.

This has been compartmentalized into many chambers which are again separated considerably as an adaptation to their functions. The block can be divided into three compartments accordingly to the passages between them. Posterior compartment is separated from two anterior compartments by the narrow passage which runs parallel to the anterior and posterior walls. Anterior compartment is again divided into left and right anterior compartments which are separated from each other by the main passage which runs from the main entrance to the junction where it connects with the narrow passage at a right angle. This main passage makes us feel nothing but more privileged and gifted walking through the smiling, proud and graceful faces who are looking at us.

In the left anterior compartment, the old anatomy lecture hall which is the only one of its type in Sri Lanka, is found between the A/C lobby laterally and three office rooms

medially. You can enter the old Anatomy lecture hall directly through another entrance which is in the anterior wall. The A/C lobby has been separated again into three areas. The IT unit is separated laterally from the two cabins by a small conference hall. Superiorly the A/C lobby contains a L-shaped space which has been divided into five cabins. Anterior to the A/C lobby is the small lecture room.

On the right side of the block the dissection hall is situated between the anterior and posterior wall. It has been divided laterally into superior and inferior compartments. The superior compartment is the histology lab. The inferior compartment is the technical rooms of dissection. The museum is bounded laterally by the dissection hall, anteriorly by the anterior wall, medially by the main passage and posteriorly by two offices which in turn separates the museum from the narrow passage.

In the posterior compartment, the main office separates the rest rooms of lecturers on its left from another three office rooms on its right. By the most lateral office room in the right side, the narrow passage is connected to the posterior empty area through the posterior wall of the block. The Anatomy block consists of a good ventilation system which lights and ventilates the interior through the well-designed roof. And this is also composed of efficient electrical and water supplies. Because of the structural and functional importance, the Anatomy block will gleam forever as the jewel of the crown.

***W. L. G. Sachith Udayanga***

# A Better Healer - A Better You

Ears that hear the silent screams
Eyes that see through the veils
Words that can soothe an aching heart
The touch that can heal the lame

A hand that helps the fallen
A heart that feels the pain
A shoulder that carries the burden
To save a life each day

The patience to bear the weight of it all
The courage to hold your own
The kindness to share with everyone
Are you ready to reach your goal?

Life is precious, fragile and weak
What can we do to help it succeed?
Values to treasure, hearts to cheer
Heal the sick, help the poor
***Ranali Perera***

# My First Day at the Anatomy "Block".....

Since I was a little child, I had the sole ambition of entering the Colombo Medical Faculty. Before coming into it, I have passed by the Faculty several times and every time I did so, I looked at the architecture not just simply as old buildings but as monuments which are sprinkled with golden dust of a glorious history. Certainly I didn't know much about the Faculty at that time but I had a feeling in my veins that this institution wasn't just an ordinary place. But to my astonishment, until I came here I didn't know that the building which was situated behind the Faculty was the actual birthplace of many skilled surgeons and anatomists of our country!!

In the very first week, we began to dissect bodies. I remember that first day as crystal clear. After lunch we were instructed to proceed to the Anatomy Department which is famously called ''The Anatomy Building'' for dissections. As we came near the building, we saw the year '1913' marked on the top of the entrance which was previously used and we took our first step into it through the new entrance. This is the pride of every new medical student and a strategic highlight of our training - dissecting the human body to see the structures that make it function.

The Anatomy building is basically divided into several sections with a main entrance: an ante-room where fresh bodies, we call them *Cadavers* are 'prepared' and preserved; the Dissection Hall which is further divided into bays; the Histology lab, the Museum - that houses artifacts and models, a library of some sort; and several other offices.

We started to trail along the corridor with the student pack, until we saw many of the students have stopped their walk just before the entrance. That is obviously because most of them knew that they were going to encounter a different kind of situation they had never experienced before; seeing dead bodies! Although we were still near the entrance we could smell a glimpse of that classic smell of cadavers which have been soaked in formalin for some time. Before then, most of us have only seen dead bodies at funerals. I had been to several funerals just but I did not dare move close to the casket most of the time. I too had a paranoid fear over the years for any human body not breathing. The only clear pictures of dead bodies I had were those I formed from watching movies and newspapers. But we still managed to bear our thoughts.

We were told to enter the hall in the left side at the end of the corridor. The more we got closer to the hall, the more we felt the aroma. Some of us were feeling nauseated. We braced ourselves and entered in to the hall. My heart intermittently skipped several beats. "A group of dead bodies waiting to get dissected by us", I thought. The dissection hall was filled with cadavers laid on dissection tables, face up and giving the impression they might just get up at any moment. Interestingly, most of us seemed to be feeling okay with the conditions, though we were all unusually quiet. Either we were not really scared or we were doing a good job of hiding our fears.

We didn't know anything about dissecting although we were only asked to bring several tools for that purpose. But soon thereafter we got the fundamentals of dissecting by watching the well skilled research assistants going through with the cadavers. It was

fascinating to watch. Our preparations for this 'encounter' turned out to be adequate. After sometime I questioned myself, “Where’s that smell we felt?” I then realized that smell was not bad as we thought earlier. We have quickly adapted to it. How interesting! On the next day onwards we started our dissections. After 6 months, still we are going through the journey with different parts of the human body with the aid of cadavers. We are very grateful to the people who have donated their bodies to educate us.

We, the 2011 A/L batch were able to enter the Faculty in the 100th year of the Anatomy building. How lucky we are. I wish this building which is filled with wonderful memories will remain here for another several hundred years.

***Chirath Priyanga Madurapperuma***

# The “Block” of Life

It was in the Faculty Handbook that I first came across the word “Anatomy Block”. We had just got enrolled at Medical Faculty, Colombo (MFC) as the 2011/AL batch, and I was glancing through the pages with relish; I had got it only that morning, and had not really got to the part about exams…

Under the modest topic “History of the Faculty”, it was mentioned that “The Anatomy Block, built in 1913, is currently the oldest building.” “But that makes it 100 years old this year!” I thought. “Now *that’s* one old building”, and turned the page.

In short, it was just another stone-and-brick contraption to me - and an ancient one at that - in the middle of all the others that are just there all over the place, making up what we collectively call Colombo. Today, barely 6 months into the life under the Pacha Tree, I can barely believe the attitude I once had towards the Block across the road.

Ask any member of the staff, from the Dean Sir himself, or any student in the Faculty who has been around for a while, to choose their favourite out of the half-a-dozen but certainly not - unimpressive buildings the Faculty boasts of, and you would invariably end up with the answer “Anatomy Block”, and it would not be due to its size, shape or colour.

Oh, I grant you, its architecture certainly has a charm of its own! Maybe it’s the ingenuity of the *suddahs* who drew up the plans, maybe the skill of the craftsmen; either way, I’m yet to see a more picturesque sight around Colombo - save perhaps Ananda Viharaya - than the Block in a rainy day, with the grey of the brooding sky seeming to blend with the ashen bricks, forming a continuity stretching away to infinity… However! I’m no architect, and it is not my place to wax poetic about the building, as a building. No, what really captivates me about the Block is more *spiritual* than materialistic. For it is more than just a century-old building; the closest I can get is to say that it has a *personality*, a life if you will, of its own…..

As one walks along the deserted corridors in a bright morning, past the sturdy doors

leading to inner offices and clinics, as the footsteps echo around the empty halls readying for the afternoon practical sessions, you feel it. The years that have rolled on, the Herculean deeds done in unknown and unsung, and the expectancy of many more to come… to put it bluntly, you *feel* the Block.

Gazing around at the thick colonial pillars and the intricate wood carvings in the Old Lecture Hall, it is not really difficult to let the years fall away in one's mind, right back to 1913, when MFC was still the 'Ceylon Medical College', not even a 'faculty' owing to the simple reason that there was no *university* in the whole island to own a faculty, and still offering the Diploma of LMS. From that distant day, to the year of 2013, what profound changes the Block must have witnessed, from the length of the young medical student's skirt, to the shape of the scalpel blade…!

How many students must have walked up these same corridors to the dissecting halls, over the years, to learn of the art and miracle, that is Life! With the blades of a century ago, as with the modern dissecting sets of today, generation after generation of students have patiently penetrated through the skin, superficial fascia and deep fascia, right down to the muscle and bone, learning the universal truth that beauty is not even skin-deep, all within these hallowed halls…..

Who knows how many thousands of lives have been saved in the past 100 years by hands that first took up the scalpel inside the Block? How many eminent surgeons and physicians has the Block bred and nurtured, as they took the first faltering steps into the intricate and unforgiving world of Medicine? If it could but talk, what tales might not we hear, of trial and error, of victory and bitter defeat, of revelations, of love, life, and death……

Seeing the Block today, with tiled floor, air-conditioning, state-of-the-art computers and all the other technological advancements that this age so adeptly provides, it is indeed awe-inspiring to remind oneself that teaching and learning went on just as efficiently a century ago, without none of those amenities, inside these very halls...

In retrospect, it is a long, tedious but oh-so-fruitful journey that the Block has made from those distant days, to reach the present enviable status of the best of its kind in the island.

Boasting a compact museum, with countless valuable specimens, a dissecting hall of vast capacities, a fully-equipped histology lab, a sizable library, lecture halls, conference halls and computer labs, the Block arguably has everything it can ask for. But it is our firm belief that after ten decades, this is still the beginning, the dawn of a new era of bigger and better things. There is a long way yet to go, a country to serve.....

And looking over a century's worth of glorious achievements, one can be sure that the Block will certainly go all that way, and a little more too!

Long Live the Anatomy Block!!

***Dulitha Jayal Senerath Yapa***

# Oldest Building Standing

Cross Francis road from the Faculty main grounds and you come upon the Anatomy block; the allegory of the rich and prodigious history of the second oldest medical school in South Asia. Opened on the 1st of June, 1870 by the then Governor Sir Hercules Robinson, Dr James Loos became the first principal of the Colombo Medical School. The chair in Anatomy was created in 1927. The oldest remaining structure of the establishment to date is the Koch Memorial Clock Tower erected in 1881 to perpetuate the memory of Dr. E. L. Koch, the second Principal of the School. The anatomy block built mainly around 1913 remains the oldest building standing.

Look around and you catch a glimpse of the now defunct entrance to the block, with a plaque over the door reading "1913", flanking the operative entrance on one side. But your mind gazes not at the details but the majesty and splendor of the whole of a masterpiece of architecture. Step in and you enter the "hall of fame" of the Department. Portraits of the "greats" that have shaped the history of the Department and Faculty ornament the left of your path as you proceed in. I have to make an excuse, for I, having wandered the many stretches of this comparatively "not-so-vast" Faculty, have still not beheld the Anatomy block entirely.

Most of my experiences of the block have been in the dissection hall; a sepulcher for the line-up of cadavers resting on trolleys, being dissected by those who had been more fortunate than the donors of the cadavers; at least for the present. Perhaps at the maiden experience of dissection, the fact that the physicality of a man who once lived among us is being mutilated for the cause of education and the impermanency of our existence may haunt one. But as with many an ordeal, time dampens the effect and life at the dissection hall gradually becomes akin to a stroll in the park. Although this de-conditioning makes life so much easier, it cannot be denied that it is, in any case, a dehumanizing process. Look up from your dissection table and you see the Histology lab; a place of practice of one of the more modern sciences. Peering through the eyepiece of a microscope one appreciates the minutiae of the body and attending a session at the lab one appreciates the minuteness of the Faculty and the fact that it's accommodating way beyond its "carrying capacity". Attached to the dissection hall is the Anatomy museum, exhibiting an array of specimens for the study of human Anatomy. For the students of the unprivileged 1st year banned from utilizing the study-areas-proper by the chartered seniors, the museum functions as a chief study area. And given the fact that the other departments do not possess similar facilities, it has become a favourite among students not only for the study of Anatomy but also other disciplines. Towards the opposite wing of the block you come across the nationally recognized "old Anatomy lecture theatre"; a remainder of the days gone by. A lecture theatre in the correct sense of the word, it lies, for the most part, forgotten; yielding to the assault of time. Interestingly, just a few paces ahead lies a manifestation of novelty; the AC lobby. Equipped with modern comforts and modern facilities, it is like an enclave of the present within the boundaries of the past. One other place in the block I have witnessed; the office of Dr Malalasekera. The end of every week

beckons us for a reckoning. The weekly reviews and tutorials, the most recent of which, I and my friends in the group had to endure in this office were quite an experience. With the atmosphere created during the sessions, one doesn't perceive the milieu of the office. It can be said that the experience is one of disillusionment, enlightenment and at times, also of dejection.

Having been in the Faculty for only two terms of academics, I still have much to experience in life in the Faculty. Ernest Henry Starling (1926) has said "*The physiology of today is the medicine of tomorrow*" and Jean François Fernel in *De Naturali Parte Medicinae Libri Septem* (1542) has said "*Anatomy is to physiology as geography is to history; it describes the theatre of events*". And as such, I think it's fair to say that the Anatomy block has been and will be the theatre of most part of the life of many an anticipant in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

***O.T.P. Gunaratne***

# So it Stands Tall and Proud

A proud looking white building of colonial architecture, an initial warning, "The Department is very strict on discipline", a row of framed photographs of esteemed medical professionals on either side of a narrow corridor, a door opening and the eye meeting a row of 'dead bodies' on a row of trolleys, an involuntary wave of nausea sweeping over, a poignant smell penetrating the nose, hurried feet crossing the room with held breath, another door opening and the eyes surveying the real specimens floating in some liquid with near fascination. Hence ended our first introductory visit to the Anatomy Block - the first of a many, many more to come.

The subsequent visits familiarized us and in some way brought us closer to the Department, and to both the academic and the non academic staff - the basis for which was on a large part, the respect not only for the immense knowledge and support we gained from them but also for their sheer dedication to what they were doing and the organized, well-tailored manner in which it was carried out.

With time so many things changed from our first visit: the most distinct superficial change being how we adapted to the atmosphere of the dissection halls and yet, as a whole the change we underwent was somehow deeper than that. I believe seeing the cadavers laid on the trolleys and realizing that they were once of people who were very much alive, of people who went through life and fought with life much like we do now, somehow made us realize how fickle life is, not merely because it was the certainty and the reality of death that we were staring at, but also because we were looking at the reality of our own bodies. We were taught to respect the cadavers on this basis and also, as we came to appreciate more and more with time, because they were the prime source which facilitated our better understanding of human Anatomy along with the excellent prosections in the museum.

So many subsequent events actually brought us even closer to the Block; primarily among them the Anatomy Block centenary exhibition which enabled us to horn our skills in

presenting and organizing. It was in many ways a rich experience of working with a team, handling responsibilities and trying to think a little out of the box. Looking back, it fills one with pride to have been able to be a part of the history of this great building which has done so much for the medical education of Sri Lanka for a century.

As it goes on, our knowledge and attitudes would further improve laying an excellent foundation for future medical careers, the building itself would be renovated preserving its character, and there is hope in each and every one of our hearts that it would stand tall and proud for many more years to come serving generations of medical students to come as it has done for so long with an excellence unmatched.

***Yasoda Gamage***

# The Block

100 years of proud history, thousands of doctors; not only knowledgeable and able but also with a proud heritage behind them. Countless young minds with burning desires within them to learn medicine, LEARN ANATOMY, learn to become good and competent doctors; walk in and out, year by year. Not only do they learn Anatomy at the BLOCK, but they also learn about life; HOW UNCERTAIN LIFE CAN BE, how a person once alive like you and me end up decaying into nothing but a lifeless mass of HYDROCARBON. This HALLOWED institution, THE BLOCK is a place where both the dead and the living serve mankind and work hand in hand for the betterment of every living soul in this land. The time a student spends among the cadavers of some of the most generous people, learning the amazing structure of the body gives him or her sometime to think about the value of life, the selflessness and generosity one can achieve for the greater good even after becoming a lifeless mass of bone and flesh. All in all, while being a part of this proud history of 100 years what always comes to my mind is that, even after 100 years the block still stands with ever growing pride and glamour; with eyes that cannot see, mouths that cannot speak producing priceless personalities to serve mankind; in silence.

***Janidu Gunarathna***

# Anatomy Block

As we crossed the Francis Road leaving behind the other buildings of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo we were told that we were about to enter a unique building. However, we need not have been told this. As we stood outside the Anatomy Block, we sensed that it was different, we sensed that it was special. The picturesque exterior of the Anatomy Block itself, seemed to suggest how distinctive it was.

That was nearly 7 months ago, during our first few days at the Colombo Medical Faculty. We have crossed Francis Road and entered the Anatomy Block many times since then, but the fascination and interest we associated with it on that first day, still remains. On our very first day there, our body group comprising of 9 students were assigned to a cadaver. In the Anatomy Block, through those cadavers, we have learnt things which we could not have dreamt of learning elsewhere.

The past 7 months at the Anatomy Block were some of the most intriguing months of my life. I know that the Anatomy Block will always hold a special place in my heart, as it did for thousands before me. As it celebrates its hundredth anniversary today, I know that it will continue to keep its doorways open to enlighten the minds of the generations of students yet to come.

***Isuri De Silva***

# Anatomy - As I see it...

Practicing for tomorrow, learning the art
Taken from the pages of Last
Patience, humanity, kindness in the heart
Seeing reality, lighting the dark
Scalpel, forceps at hands reach
Grants open, we start to proceed
Reaching the deep, focused and composed
Observing what's hidden amidst the bones
Lots to remember, so little time
Sweat and stress, our newest allies
Depending on the books to lift us high
To reach our goal, to save other lives

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