The Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) is the premier professional association in Sri Lanka, which brings together medical practitioners of all grades and all branches of medicine. The SLMA is the oldest medical organization in Australasia and South East Asia, with a proud history dating from 1887. At its inception it was called the Ceylon Branch of the British Medical Association. In 1951 it evolved into the Ceylon Medical Association and in 1972, when Sri Lanka became a Republic, the name was changed to Sri Lanka Medical Association.

The office of the SLMA is situated at “Wijerama House” on Wijerama Mawata Colombo 7, a beautiful Victorian building, named after Dr. E.M. Wijerama, a distinguished past president of the SLMA who donated his residence to the association.

At present the total membership of the SLMA is 2,216 which is rather disappointing, considering that there are approximately 20,000 registered medical practitioners in Sri Lanka today.

The Annual Scientific Sessions are held in March every year and provides a forum for the members to present their research and further their professional and academic development. The 119th ASS were held from the 22nd to 25th March 2006 and was attended by 449 Delegates. The Chief Guest at the Sessions was Dame Diedrie Hine, the President of the BMA and there were 33 Foreign and 45 Local Guest speakers. The program included 16 Symposia, 6 Plenary and 10 Guest Lectures, 3 Workshops and 2 Orations. There were also 47 Free Papers and 36 Poster Presentations of original research done by our members.

The lower key “Foundation Sessions” are scheduled to be held from 16th to 18th November. The program will consist mainly of Symposia with four Guest Lectures and two Orations

In addition to these, the educational program of the association includes Monthly Clinical meetings and Guest Lectures held in Colombo, and Quarterly Regional Meetings held in provinces outside Colombo.

The Association functions through its Expert Committees
• Communicable Diseases
• Drugs
• Ethics
• Ethical Review
• Food and Nutraceuticals
• Getting Research into Practice
• Health Care Waste Management
• Health management
• Media
• Medical Education
• National Health Policy
• Non Communicable Diseases
• Prevention of Motor Traffic Accidents
• Snake Bite
• Tobacco Alcohol and Substance Abuse
• Tsunami Disaster Relief
• Women’s Health

The SLMA has taken the responsibility of formulating National Guidelines on various important topics. These committees have formulated several such Guidelines namely Management of Lipid Disorders, Communication Skills and Counselling Skills, Management of Asthma, Code of Practice for Assisted Reproductive Technologies, Advocacy Document for prevention of Type II Diabetes, and Management of Snake Bite.

I would like to highlight some of the noteworthy activities of the Expert Committees in the past year.

Communicable Diseases Committee
Communicable Diseases Committee has conducted Seminars on Avian Influenza, HIV/AIDS and Varicella.

Three Seminars on Tuberculosis have been held, in Colombo, in Matara in the Southern Province and Chilaw in the North Western Province, in...
collaboration with the National Program on Tuberculosis and Control of Chest Diseases, to sensitize medical staff of General and Base Hospitals.

A booklet on Congenital Syphilis has been printed and distributed to all primary health care institutions and is available on demand to any health care personnel.

Committee on Drugs
A booklet on Antibiotic Guidelines to advise medical specialists, grade medical officers and family physicians on the appropriate use of antimicrobial agents is being prepared.

The Committee is also involved in developing a National Medicinal Drugs Policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the WHO.

Continuing Professional Development Committee
Having successfully launched a pilot project in two Districts outside Colombo, the committee plans to conduct this program island wide. Steps are being taken to raise the necessary funds from the Ministry of Health & WHO.

Ethics Committee
Ethical issues such as unethical broadcast drug advertising, broadcast publicity by doctors, prevention of medical negligence, inadequate time spent on consultation, and updating the SLMA Declaration of Health which spells out the patients rights were taken up for discussion and disseminated to the membership by the monthly News Letter.

Health Care Waste Management
This committee has been successful in urging the government to implement the National Health Care Waste Policy that had been drawn up in 2001.

Health Management
A Consultation on “Balancing the requirement and supply of Doctors” was conducted with the collaboration of the WHO. The proceedings are now in print and will act as a policy document for the Ministry of Health.

A Career guidance Seminar for young doctors was conducted with participation by Specialist Colleges and Associations.

National Health Policy
Though there have been several health policy documents, strategic frameworks, task force documents and master plans, there has been a failure of implementation of accepted policies in a systematic manner and poor monitoring of progress. Further, the SLMA recognises the fact that the health needs of a nation are in a continuous state of flux and needs frequent evaluation and reprioritization of policies and action as was demonstrated in the Tsunami disaster.

This committee has drawn up a Document in which the main thrust is on Equity of distribution of health care, inclusive of vulnerable groups, Internally Displaced Persons, and Victims of Disaster, Investing more on preventive services, Enhancement of primary care leading to a national scheme of general practice and referral system, combating malnutrition, and efficient management of human and financial resources. The document contains General Directional Policies from which Operational Policies should flow and it has been presented to the Ministry of Health and all the Political Party Leaders.

Media
High quality Medical Journalism is being encouraged by awarding the “Excellence in Health Journalism” prizes to the best selected article in Sinhala, Tamil and English, the three languages used in Sri Lanka. A Seminar was also held for skills development in Health Science Communication and Career Guidance Seminar for prospective Health and Science Journalists.

Medical Education
A CME Bulletin is published bimonthly and distributed free of charge. The articles are presented in the distant education format, and provides a useful update for primary care physicians and general practitioners. Readers who return answers to the MCQ’s in the CME Bulletin are entitled to certificate of CME participation.

A Training of Trainers programme in Counselling Skills is being planned. It is intended to produce a DVD of ideal counselling sessions, to be given to trainers who in turn will use them to train other doctors in their respective institutions.

Non Communicable Diseases
The committee has published an advocacy document for the prevention of Type II Diabetes in Sri Lanka.

There are an estimated 1M diabetics and
another 1M with pre diabetes in Sri Lanka and this figure is expected to double by 2025. In order to battle this pandemic a Diabetic Task Force has been set up The main activity of this committee has been to increase the public awareness of diabetes and prevention of diabetes and cardiovascular disease amongst school children and the youth of our country, through a series of Workshops, Seminars, Radio and TV programs and using the printed media, posters stickers, and slogans. The Health Education Bureau and the National Institute of Education have been involved to institute curriculum changes in schools and universities. The activities will culminate with the “Diabetic Walk” which is scheduled for the 19th of November at which children from 25 schools in Colombo, University students, medically related professional organizations, diabetic patients from the diabetic association of Sri Lanka and members of the public are expected to participate.

Prevention of Motor Traffic Accidents
Efforts are being continued to legislate the wearing of seat belts. Implementation of fixing reflectors in bicycle pedals and use of luminous paint or stickers to mark elevated areas and obstacles has been done in various parts of the country in collaboration with the Police Department and the Department of Motor Traffic.

Snake Bite
The Guidelines in management of Snake bite have been made available in a CD.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Prevention of smoking has been promoted in the School Science day program throughout the island with the collaboration of the Ministry of Health and the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science.

Tsunami Disaster Relief
The generous donation of the CMAAO has enabled the SLMA to launch a joint CMAAO/SLMA Scholarship scheme for children who have lost one or both parents in the Tsunami disaster of 26th December 2004. We hope to use the interest generated by investing the donation to generate sufficient funds to award 25 children a sum of Rs. 2,000/-—monthly till they complete their education or leave school. If funds permit we hope to give an extra sum of money to purchase school books, uniforms and shoes at the beginning of each year.

Women’s Health
A seminar on Domestic Violence was held in the course of this year. The journal of the SLMA the Ceylon Medical Journal is published quarterly by Elsevier. It has the distinction of being the only Indexed Journal published in Sri Lanka. In keeping with the requirements laid down by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, the SLMA is in the process of setting up a Sri Lanka Clinical Trials Registry.

The SLMA has also launched a web site www.slma.lk opening our doors to the world.
Guidelines Produced in the Current Year (cont’d)

- A Provisional Code of Practice for Assisted Reproductive Technologies
- Advocacy Document for the Prevention of Type II Diabetes in Sri Lanka
- Revised Guidelines for the Management of Snake Bite in Hospital

Communicable Diseases Committee

- Seminars on
  - Avian Influenza
  - HIV AIDS
  - Varicella
  - Tuberculosis
- Booklet Congenital Syphilis

Committee on Drugs

- In the process of preparing
  - Antibiotic Guidelines
  - National Medicinal Drugs Policy

CPD Committee

- Completed two pilot projects
- Planning to launch an island-wide programme

Ethics Committee

- Subjects discussed this year
  - Unethical broadcast drug advertising
  - Broadcast publicity by doctors
  - Prevention of medical negligence
  - Inadequate time spent on consultation
  - Updating the SLMA Declaration of Health

Health Care Waste Management Committee

- Implementation of the National Health Care Waste Policy of 2001
Health Management Committee

- Consultation on balancing the requirement and supply of doctors
- Career Guidance for young doctors

Committee on National Health Policy

- Drawing up a document on the National Health Policy containing general directional policies from which operational policies should flow

Media Committee

- Awarding prizes for excellence in Health Journalism
- Conducted seminar on Health Science Communication and Career Guidance for prospective Health Science Journalists

Medical Education Committee

- Publication of bi-monthly CME Bulletin
- Training of trainers in Counselling Skills

Committee on Non-Communicable Diseases

- Advocacy document on prevention of Type II Diabetes
- Setting up of a diabetic Task Force
  - Increasing awareness of diabetes among the public
  - Diabetic Walk

Committee on Prevention of Motor Traffic Accidents

- Efforts to legislate wearing of seat belts
- Fixing reflectors on bicycle pedals
- Luminous paint/stickers to mark obstacles on the road
Committee on Snake Bite

Guidelines in management of snake bite made available in CD format

Committee on Tobacco, Alcohol and Substance Abuse

School Science Day Programme to prevent smoking

Committee on Tsunami Disaster Relief

Launching of CMAAC/SLMA scholarship for children who have lost one or both parents in the Tsunami Disaster of 26th December 2004

Thank You

- Ceylon Medical Journal
- SLMA Website: www.slama.lk