

# **Report on the 8th Biennial Conference of the South Asian Association of Physiologists (SAAP 8) & 35th Anniversary Academic Sessions of the Physiological Society of Sri Lanka**

## **Introduction:**

8th Biennial Conference of the South Asian Association of Physiologists (SAAP 8) & 35th Anniversary Academic Sessions of the Physiological Society of Sri Lanka was held successfully from 11th to 13th November 2022 as a hybrid conference.

The conference flyers were disseminated to the SAAP member countries from the beginning of 2022, and the invitations to all SAAP member countries were sent in April 2022.

Three successful webinars were organized by the publicity committee of the SAAP organizing committee by internationally acclaimed speakers:

- 1st Webinar on 8th April 2022: "The Evolution and Future of the Discipline of Physiology" By Prof Barbara Goodman
- 2nd webinar 3rd November 2022: "The Evolution of Physiology Teaching" by Prof Robert G. Carroll
- 3rd webinar 8th November 2022: "Contents, Context, and Concepts of Medical Sciences in South Asia" by Prof Maj Gen [Retd] Professor Muhammad Aslam

The webinars were excellent and there were many participants from all SAAP member countries.

## **SAAP-PSSL conference activities:**

E-poster presentation session was held successfully as a total virtual event on the 5th November 2022 from 1pm to 4pm. Total 39 E-posters were accepted to be presented. 3 panel of judges judged the E-poster presentations out of them best poster presentation, second and third places were selected.

Pre-congress hands-on workshop on autonomic function testing was held on the 11th November 2022 at the new University of Colombo, Faculty of Medicine tower in the Department of Physiology. Eminent researcher Professor K. K. Deepak (MD, PhD), Professor in Physiology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi contributed as the main resource person,

with Prof Savitri Wimalasekera and Dr Chamila Dalpathadu from Sri Lanka contributing as resource persons. The excellent workshop was attended by 55 participants.

The inauguration of the main conference was held on 12th November 2022 at Mihilaka Medura Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, Sri Lanka, with Professor Susirith Mendis, emeritus Professor of Physiology and former vice chancellor of University of Ruhuna gracing the occasion as the chief guest. There were addresses by the chief guest, president SAAP Prof Kusal Das, President PSSL Prof Piyusha Atapattu and Co-chair of the Conference organizing committee Prof Dinithi Fernando. The K N Seneviratne memorial research award for 2022 was awarded to Dr. Damsara Nandadeva, from the Department of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine University of Peradeniya, for the research paper titled "Blunted Peripheral but Not Cerebral Vasodilator Function in Young Otherwise Healthy Adults with Persistent Symptoms Following COVID-19". The K.N. Seneviratne Memorial Award for Physiology was awarded to 3 students who obtained the highest marks for physiology at the end of stream basic sciences stream examination at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. The inaugural issue of the Sri Lanka journal of Physiology was launched at the SAAP-8, PSSL 2022 inauguration by the Editor in Chief Prof Vajira Weerasinghe. The K. N. Seneviratne memorial oration was delivered by Professor Deepthi De Silva, Professor in Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, Kelaniya titled " Insights into physiology through the study of rare genetic diseases". The inauguration was concluded by the vote of thanks by the secretary PSSL Dr Chamila Dalpathadu.

A successful two-day hybrid conference followed with participation of both onsite and online registrants. The key note address was delivered by Prof Kusal Das, President of the South Asian Association of Physiologists(SAAP) titled "Low oxygen microenvironment and vascular pathophysiology". Scientific program included two invited lectures from local eminent physiologists and three SAAP senior members from India, Pakistan and Nepal. There were four excellent symposia organized by each of the SAAP countries, which were mostly conducted by online delivery, except for the symposium by India with Prof KK Deepak, and the symposium by Pakistan with Prof Samina Malik participating onsite. It was further enriched by six guest lecturers spanning a wide range of topics. There were two panel discussions which were interesting with interactive participation by the audience, and 4 local symposia delivered by experts in several aspects of physiology. The conference was further enriched by the delivery of the research presentation by the recipient of the 2021 K N Seneviratne memorial award. There were four sessions for free paper presenters, with 24 oral presentations on original research of

excellent quality, presented by both junior and senior researchers of all SAAP member countries, delivered onsite and online. The conference was further enriched by two more orations of the Physiological Society of Sri Lanka; the Carlo Fonseka Oration by Prof Panduka Karunanayake, Professor in Medicine, Department of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, titled "Rediscovering Physiology in Contemporary Medicine: The Foundational Insights of Claude Bernard" and the Valentine Basnayake Oration by Prof Savithri Wimalasekera, Professor in Physiology Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayawardenapura, titled "Physical activity and Cardiopulmonary function in health and disease". The successful 2-day conference was concluded on 13th November 2022, with concluding remarks by the SAAP conference co chairpersons, and the President DSAAP Prof Kusal Das. Certificates were awarded to the Best three oral and e-poster presentations at the closing ceremony.

The post-congress workshop on Online Assessments for Learning and Evaluating Pre-Clinical Sciences of the SAAP-8, PSSSL 2022 conference was jointly organized by Physiological Society of Sri Lanka and Centre for Medical Education (CenMED), National University of Singapore. It was conducted at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka on 19th November 2022, from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm.

This was conducted as a hybrid workshop, with resource persons joining from Singapore, United States and Sri Lanka; Professor Dujeeva D. Samarasekera, the Senior Director of the Centre for Medical Education (CenMED) and the Senior Advisor of the university's Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning, Professor Rob Carroll, the Professor of Physiology and Associate Dean for Medical Student Education, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, USA and the chair of Education Committee of the International Union of Physiological Sciences, Professor Chen Zhi Xiong, the Assistant Dean (Education) of NUS Medicine and a Centre for Medical Education (CenMED), Ms Wu Haixin, a Senior Manager at Centre for Instructional Technology (CIT), National University of Singapore and Professor Vajira Weerasinghe, the Chair and Senior Professor of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. There were 72 participants from the South Asian region; Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. There were 15 participants joining onsite, and 58 participants joining online. The workshop was offered free to participants, which enabled participants with limited resources to make the best use of the valuable workshop.

We thank the president, secretary general and the executive council of the SAAP, all members of the organizing committee of the SAAP-8, PSSL conference, Council members of the Physiological Society of Sri Lanka, all international and local speakers, the chairpersons and judges, and all delegates from SAAP member countries and Sri Lanka who contributed to the success of the conference.

Prof Piyusha Atapattu:


President Physiological Society of Sri Lanka 2021-2022

Co-Chairpersons, Scientific Programme Committee



Prof. Dinithi Fernando: Co-chairperson

Conference organizing committee



Prof Indu Nanayakkara : Co-chairperson

Conference organizing committee



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