



# AAUP NEWSLETTER

News update of the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya

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March 2017/2018

Message from the President of the AAUP  
Eng. Sarath Seneviratne



The University of Peradeniya (and its Predecessors) has completed 75 years. The AAUP has been in existence for 30 of these years. It is, therefore, a good occasion to evaluate our contribution and assess where we stand today. There have been several articles in the media about the University, its successes and failures. The AAUP should examine its role in this context. I take this opportunity to evaluate the Association. The AAUP should be a body which comprises all the graduates of the university. However, in spite of the many Chapters spread over the world, we have not been able to muster a majority of our graduates in to our fold. If we examine the activities of the alumni groups of well reputed universities, we see that they play a very prominent role in the affairs of the university and the community in general. In comparison, being a small group of alumni, we have confined ourselves to a few activities, connected with the university and its community. A close examination will reveal that we have not made any real impact on society in general. The AAUP has the potential of becoming a forum for the discussion of matters of importance, not only to the university but society in general, as well. Have we performed this role satisfactorily? Two years ago, we started the "Thursday Forum", a series of talks and discussions with the aim of creating some awareness on general issues of current interest. However this series had to be discontinued due to the lack of interest shown by the members. The AAUP has also failed to muster a sizable component of the younger generation.

Our efforts to garner the enrolment and support of recent graduates in AAUP activities have not met with much success.

I take this opportunity to make a humble appeal to our members to assist us with suggestions that would enable us to perform a relevant role in the community. Committed persons with vision should come forward, join the Executive Committee and its various Standing Committees and create the thrust needed for the AAUP to go forward.

We have opened a Member's Page in our AGM Newsletter, in order to provide a forum for the membership to express their ideas on matters of general interest. Please use this opportunity to write articles, in the language of your choice, and send them to the editor for publication. I hope that the members would help the AAUP to expand its activities and play a more significant role in the University and society in general.

## The Executive Committee 2017/2018

<i>President :</i>	Eng. Sarath Seneviratne
<i>Immediate Past-President :</i>	Prof. Rupika Rajakaruna
<i>Vice-Presidents :</i>	Dr. Anura P. Dantanarayana Mrs. Lalitha Gunawardena Prof. Siril Wijesundara Mr. Ravi Mulleriyawa Prof. Swarna Wimalasiri
<i>General Secretary :</i>	Dr. Pradeepa Bandaranayake
<i>Assistant Secretaries :</i>	Dr. Anoja wanigasekara Prof. Terrence Madhujith
<i>Treasurer :</i>	Dr. Amalka Piniidiyaarachchi
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Dr. Hemalie Nandalal
<i>Editor :</i>	Prof. Jayanthi Edirisinghe
<i>Committee Members :</i>	Dr. Shyama Banneheka Dr. Asoka Wickramasinghe Ms. Dharshini Hulugalla Dr. Jayalath Edirisinghe Prof. Savitri Kumar Mrs. Asoka Dissanayake Mrs. Chandra Weerawardana Prof. Chandani Perera Dr. Ranjith Jayasekara Ms. Hema Gamage

# A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words!

## Activities of the AAUP 2017/2018

The 28th AGM - 9 March 2017



Pre- AGM discussion on current problems of the UoP



Dr. Neil Halpe addressing the gathering

## Celebration of the life & work of the late Professor Ashley Halpe



Mrs. Lalitha Gunawardena highlighting the life and work of the late Professor Ashley Halpe, who was felicitated posthumously.



Prof. Shaluka Kodithuwakku representing the Vice-Chancellor, presenting the Felicitation souvenir to Mrs. Bridget Halpe.

## Award of Scholarships at the AGM 2017





## AGM-Fellowship & Lunch at the Lodge



Ladies in conversation



The Vice-Chancellor's wife drawing the lucky raffle ticket



Guests at lunch –Marquees in the garden of the Lodge



Very senior Alumni enjoying the rhythm of music



Alumni singing to the tune of the band

## Student Welfare



Donation of equipment to the SNRC by the Colombo Chapter



Provision of sinks to Ramanadan dining hall- to encourage students to wash their own plates

# Paduru party

(14<sup>th</sup> October -Diamond Jubilee Celebration party)



Songs from Maname



Donation - special needs students



Hanthane Api

# The Trip to Moragahakanda

(20 May 2017)



# Annual Trip to Trincomalee

(30 September to 1 October )



### **Glaucoma: the condition and current treatments**

Sight is one of our most valued senses. Much of the knowledge we acquire about the world around us comes through our eyes. Even though most of us recognize how precious sight is, many do not take the necessary steps to have optimal vision and to protect their eye health.

Glaucoma is an eye disease which when untreated leads to irreversible blindness. In fact, as many as 6 million individuals, worldwide, are blind in both eyes from this disease. Of the individuals with glaucoma, as many as half, have no idea that they are suffering from this disease. Often referred to as the 'silent killer of vision', Glaucoma does not show any symptoms in the early stages. It can only be diagnosed by regular eye examination at the ophthalmologist's office.

Glaucoma includes a complex of disease entities that have in common an increase in intraocular pressure causing damage to the optic nerve/disk and affecting the loss of vision and even causing blindness.

The front of the eye is filled with a clear fluid called the aqueous humor, which provides nourishment to the structures of the eye. When the fluid outflow gets blocked, fluid builds up and increases the pressure. The normal pressure ranges between 12 mm - 22 mm of mercury. The cause of this blockage is not clear but scientists believe that it may be due to cell debris accumulation. This could also be inherited.

Glaucoma is usually, but not always, associated with elevated pressure in the eye (Intraocular pressure). Generally, it is this elevated eye pressure that leads to damage of the eye (optic nerve). However, in some cases, glaucoma may occur in the presence of normal eye pressure. This form of glaucoma is believed to be caused by poor regulation of blood flow to the optic nerve or may be due to congenital reasons.

While anyone can get glaucoma at any age, some people are at greater risk. Elevated intraocular pressure is the main risk factor but persons who are over the age 40 and have a family history of poor vision, diabetes, and trauma to the eye or take certain steroids such as prednisone are also at risk of getting glaucoma. Regular eye examination, early diagnosis and prompt medication are of vital importance. Vision can control the quality of life!

#### **Treatments for Intra Ocular Pressure or Glaucoma:**

Glaucoma treatment may include prescription drugs (eye drops), laser surgery or microsurgery and the latest method called Tube Shunts surgery- a new

drainage device for Glaucoma. Many people with glaucoma are able to successfully control their symptoms and prevent vision loss by following the doctor's advice and with proper medication.

Currently, in developed countries, eye drops are often the first choice for treating patients. For many people, a combination of eye drops and laser surgery can control the IOP for years.

#### **Eye Drops:**

Eye drops are usually successful in keeping the eye pressure normal. There are a number of classes of drugs available in the market. These include new generation prostaglandin analogs: (Travatan Z and Lumigan), beta blockers (Timalol and Betaxalol), alpha agonists (Iopidine and Alphagan) and carbonic anhydrate inhibitors (Trusopt and Azopt). The new drugs show high efficacy with minimal side effects. However, no new drug has been marketed since early 2000 and therefore combinations of the above mentioned classes of drugs are available for patients requiring higher efficacy.

As with any other medications, glaucoma medications also have some side effects due to long duration of use.

#### **Laser Surgery:**

In cases where patients cannot tolerate eye drops or where medication alone is not enough to control the pressure or where the long term use of drugs proves too expensive for those who are in not so affluent countries, alternative treatments may be required. Laser treatment is an excellent alternative. Unfortunately, the effect of laser treatment is not long lasting. Therefore many patients will eventually require medication.

#### **Minimally invasive or Micro invasive Glaucoma Surgery (MIGS)**

These procedures let doctors treat patients earlier and more safely than the older, more aggressive surgeries. This procedure involves implanting a tiny device to allow fluid to drain from the eye reducing the intraocular pressure.

Anura P. Dantanarayana, Ph.D.,  
Principal Scientist (Rtd.)  
Drug Discovery/Glaucoma Research  
Alcon Laboratories  
Fort Worth, TX. USA



## **The Special Needs Resource Centre of the University of Peradeniya – the need for formal recognition**

Differently abled students—persons with physical disabilities – have been admitted to the University of Peradeniya, for several years. The numbers admitted, though small in the early years, have increased steadily and can be expected to increase further in the future. These students are, by the very nature of their disabilities, denied easy access to many of the programs and facilities offered by the university and should, therefore, be provided with special measures to ensure that they could pursue their academic interests on equal terms with others. Unfortunately, however, the measures currently provided by the UoP are woefully inadequate.

The late Prof. D.A.M. Weerakkody, being visually impaired himself, understood the special needs of the disabled students and endeavoured to provide them with support measures consistent with the goal of full inclusion. He was able to set up the Resource Unit for Special Needs (currently referred to as the Special Needs Resource Centre- SNRC) in November 2004, with financial assistance from the World Bank (IRQUE/IBG). Funding from the World Bank was limited to a specific period of time, thus the formal recognition of the SNRC, with adequate financial allocation and cadre provision, was a matter of paramount importance.

A Proposal, drafted by a committee appointed by the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Arts, approved at the 333<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Senate (10 December 2008) and the 374<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council (28 February 2009) was submitted, by the Vice – Chancellor, Prof. H. Abeygunawardhana (26 March 2009) to the University Grants Commission, for approval. The UGC does not appear to have responded adequately. Several other attempts have been made to regularize the position of the SNRC, with the same lack of response. Prof. Weerakkody, subsequently appealed to the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities (05-2010) the Ministry of Social Services (06-2010) and the Ministry of Higher Education (06-2010). All these appeals have been referred to the UGC for appropriate action. The SNRC remains a “unit” in name only - an anomalous entity, housed in the Faculty of Arts, under the general supervision of the Dean, with no financial allocation or cadre provision.

Funding from the World Bank ended in September 2009. Since then, the SNRC, literally limps along with funds and equipment donated by well-wishers. The SNRC is basically a room that houses twenty eight (28) disabled students and a considerable collection of sophisticated equipment. There is no money for maintenance, no provision for employment of trained personnel- not even a labourer for daily cleaning! Each year, the Dean/ Arts has the unenviable task of appealing for funds to maintain a centre which provides basic services for disabled students. The unpalatable truth is that the authorities

have failed to comply with the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities (2006). The provision of “accommodations” and “adaptation” cannot be left to the whims and fancies of charitable institutions or benevolent individuals! (An “accommodation” is a legally mandated modification or service that gives a student with a disability an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process and should be provided by the institution at no cost to the student)

The AAUP (The chief sponsor of the SNRC from its inception) has initiated a program to assist the UoP to implement standard operational procedures required for full inclusion, as their contribution to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the UoP. We were fortunate to secure the volunteer services of two foreign experts in the field of special education who, studied the facilities available, interviewed the disabled students as well as representatives from the general student body, had discussions with members of the Faculty and Administration and formulated a comprehensive action plan. The plan has been accepted by the Faculty and the AAUP is prepared to assist in its implementation.

The first step, however, is the creation of public awareness of the need to secure formal recognition for the existing unit- the SNRC; so that interested parties may help the Dean/ Arts and the VC to provide disabled students with the support required to help them complete their studies on equal terms with normal students.

### **Scholarships to be awarded at the AGM 2018**

#### **Endowed Scholarships**

**Prof. Ashley Halpe memorial scholarship:**

Best performance in English at first year examination

**Mr. Y.W. Gunawardena memorial scholarship:**

Best performance in Geography at first year examination

**Prof. K.N. Jayatilake memorial scholarship:**

Best performance in Buddhism and Indian Philosophy (PHY 205 and PHY 304)

**Prof. I. Balasooriya memorial scholarship:**

Best performance in Botany at 300 level examination by a student reading for B.Sc. Special degree in Botany

**Prof. B.L.T. De Silva memorial scholarship:**

Best performance in Biology at first year examination

**Prof. H.W. Dias scholarship:**

Best performance in Inorganic Chemistry paper at 3<sup>rd</sup> year examination (Chemistry Special)

**Sydney NSW AAUP scholarships:**

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Agriculture

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Arts

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Dental Sciences

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Medicine

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Allied Health Sciences

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Science

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Management

Best performance at first year examination Faculty of Engineering