

Birth pangs of the Sri Lankan Society for Microbiology

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Microbiology is a well established discipline in Sri Lanka. It is spread across various specialties, including clinical/ medical, dental, veterinary, food and water, plant biology, agriculture, environmental, zoology, marine biology and many other fields. The need for a common forum for microbiologists and others with an interest in microbes was a long felt need. Microbiology fields are inter-twined in obvious as well as subtle ways and close cooperation between different disciplines would facilitate and enhance the exchange of ideas, sharing of knowledge and laboratory resources. The **Sri Lankan Society for Microbiology (SSM)** was created to meet this need and launched in January 2010 following successful discussions by a group of microbiologists and parasitologists from the Faculties of Medicine. We agreed that the mission statement of SSM would be 'To promote an integrated multidisciplinary approach towards the study of basic and applied microbiology'.

The stated objectives of SSM are

- To disseminate knowledge and skills pertaining to microbiology within Sri Lanka
- To publish journals and books and convene meetings, workshops and colloquia
- To promote basic and applied research in Microbiology and related areas.
- To promote collaboration among members in all areas pertaining to the discipline of microbiology

A recruitment drive was initiated and all Institutions with a microbiology/parasitology/infection interest were informed of the new society. However, this proved to be ineffective and a more personal recruitment drive is now in progress. The Society currently has 50 members and intends to increase the membership to 100 by the end of 2011. As the membership grows, local Chapters will be initiated so that activities could be organized locally on a regular basis. The Kandy Chapter has been operational for the past year and members meet every 2 months for discussion and sharing of ideas. Visits to laboratories of fellow members have also taken place.

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SSM held its first joint activity with the Communicable Disease SubCommittee of SLMA in August 2010 on “Current strategies in prevention and management of dengue - Are we on the right track?” It is hoped that joint activities with other scientific organizations and Societies will be a regular feature of SSM activities.

The Council of SSM also agreed to publish a journal “The Sri Lankan Journal of Infectious Diseases (SLJID)” to disseminate local, collaborative and international research. As the Society expands, our hope is that many more journals related to the discipline of microbiology would be published.

Microbes are all around us – many microbes being beneficial to humanity while some are harmful. The study of microbes and their interactions are fascinating and complex. It is our fervent hope that the launch of this Society would be a step in enhancing our exploration of the world of microbiology and the various facets of the numerous interactions between microbes and the world we live in. We invite all those who are interested to join the Society.