

Post graduate training of dermatology in Sri Lanka

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Dermatology is a young speciality in Sri Lanka. In the early days in the 1940's to 1950's, post graduate training was mainly in the UK. The first dermatologists had their training and the MRCP from the United Kingdom. Some obtained the membership with a speciality in dermatology from the Royal College of Edinburgh. Later, in the 1950's when a dermatology department actually functioned at the General Hospital Colombo, a part of the training was as a house officer to this department. The trainee then proceeded to the UK, obtained the diploma of the MRCP (UK), and hopefully had an adequate training in dermatology in a dermatology department. There was no mechanism of monitoring or insisting on an adequate training. On their return to Sri Lanka they were forthwith considered consultants in dermatology.

The next phase in the post graduate education in dermatology was the establishment and activation of the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM) of the University of Colombo in 1979. This institute, which was from then responsible for post graduate education in medicine in Sri Lanka, established boards of study in the various disciplines to guide and control education in that field. Dermatology was included in the board of study of medicine. We were fortunate to have our representative in the board of study in medicine and that too as its secretary for 12 continuous years from the inception of the institute. Dermatology was considered an integral part of the training of a consultant in general medicine and a period of in service training in dermatology was included in the training run up to the Examination of the MD in General Medicine. Those opting to train in dermatology did so after successful completion of the MD in General Medicine. They then had an in service period of supervised training in a recognised dermatology department in Sri Lanka for one year and then training for a further year in a dermatology department outside Sri Lanka, recognised as suitable by the board of study. These periods were in a way monitored by obtaining reports

from the supervising consultants. After successful completion of all these phases the trainee was certified as a consultant in dermatology.

The inclusion of dermatology in the board of study in medicine, however left a lot to be desired, as dermatologists were not involved in the preparation of training programmes, assessment criteria etc. This led to a resolution being passed at a meeting of the Sri Lanka Association of Dermatologists on the 20th of April 1992, stating that "since dermatology is a specialised field of its own and the interests of dermatology are not fulfilled by the board of study in medicine or any other body the house was of the opinion that a board of study in dermatology under the auspices of the PGIM should be formed to look into the future post graduate training in dermatology".

As with all new ideas this thought of a board of study in dermatology took a long time and effort on the part of our association to bear fruit but finally on the 26th of August 1993 the senate of the University of Colombo approved the establishment of the board of study in dermatology. It took a further one year for the amended gazette notification No 831/17 of the 12 August 1994, to actually establish this board of study.

The inaugural meeting of the board of study in dermatology was held on the 13th of December of 1994. The main task of the board was to prepare a curriculum leading to board certification in dermatology and to prepare assessment criteria. This we have been able to complete, get approval of the relevant authorities, first in the board of study in medicine and then the board of management.

The curriculum has set specific aims, a definite programme and an assessment procedure. The programme for board certification in dermatology will commence after the successful completion of the MD in medicine (part II) of the PGIM and will be arranged, conducted and assessed by the Board of study in Dermatology.

The programme consists of an in service period of supervised training in a recognised dermatology department in Sri Lanka for two years and then training for a further year in a dermatology department outside Sri Lanka, recognised as suitable by the board of study.

The expected competence of a post graduate at board certification in dermatology will be :

1. capability of diagnosing and managing all types of skin diseases.
2. having a sound knowledge and skills in general medicine.
3. knowledge in dermatopathology, dermatological surgery and research methodology.
4. ability to impart the knowledge to medical and paramedical personnel and the public.

The training in Sri Lanka has been divided into four modules dealing with clinical dermatology, applied and advanced dermatology, research and a continuous assessment of skills and competence in the service component. The competence

in all four modules are assessed during the programme.

At present the first batch of 3 post MD part 2 trainees are undergoing supervised and structured training in dermatology under the new curriculum. We believe that this has resulted already in a substantial increase in the training component of the in service period and has also increased the enthusiasm and the knowledge of the trainers themselves.

We are acutely aware of our deficiencies in the form of inadequate facilities for investigation and therapy of our patients and hence in the training in immunofluorescence, photobiology, electron microscopy and laser therapy to name a few. We are also conscious of the need to constantly reassess and improve our programme of training and assessment. A workshop with the help of the medical education unit of the Faculty of Medicine Peradeniya was held recently for this purpose. We in the Sri Lanka Association of Dermatologists are confident that dermatology in Sri Lanka will move forward with the help of all.

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