

Impressions of a German Dermatologist attending the SLAD Academic Sessions in Colombo 1998

M Hundeiker¹

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The connection between Sri Lankan and German Dermatology has as well recent "historical" and personal roots as scientific and practical aims.

The historical roots are delineated in the report concerning the foundation of the SLAD². Beginning with private contacts, Dr Günter Schwenzer from Hamburg had acted as a guest lecturer in Peradeniya and in Kandy since 1982. So he and his Sri Lankan colleagues had the possibility to discuss and to compare the very different training curriculum for Dermatologists and the necessity to establish training facilities for the colleagues from Sri Lanka in their own country^{3,4}. The first consequence of these discussions was the foundation of a national Association, and Günter Schwenzer participated as a guest in this act.

The second consequence of the fruitful cooperation was the organization of the first annual academic sessions of the new society in 1986 as a joint meeting with the German DDG. The first German participants were Prof E Christophers, Dr E Anderson, I, and, of course, Dr Schwenzer. Within the following years, letters and faxes went there and back. Patients were treated in cooperation of Sri Lanka and German colleagues, and also a few private visits were possible.

The second joint meeting in 1998 was attended already by eight German Dermatologists (Anderson, Haneke, Hügel, Hundeiker, Langhans, Schwenzer, Wassilew, Ziegler). Two of us were accompanied by their wives as a sign of an important step in the development of the connections. In the first joint meeting, we got together with foreign colleagues. In the second, we already met friends.

So it was a little embarrassing that some bomb-fearing German Dermatologists did not dare to attend the sessions in Colombo and Kandy. For example, nobody from abroad feared to visit Germany in the Years when the "red army fraction" was active with terroristic acts. However, we are sure that everybody will participate in the next joint meeting. In the meantime, we hope to see the first Sri Lankan colleagues at the DDG congress in Hamburg, 1999. And I hope also that some of us can return a little bit of the overwhelming hospitality of our Sri Lankan partners.

The scientific aims of cooperative work are simple to declare. Everyone of the German Participants of the academic sessions and of the case presentations in Colombo as well as in Kandy was very impressed by the work of the Sri Lankan colleagues in these contributions to clinical research, and I myself also profited from publications in the young SLJD.

The practical and clinical aims of the Sri Lankan and German Dermatologists are corresponding. In his Editorial for the second volume of the SLJD, D N Atukorala, for example, listed as an important point of a board certification the capability of diagnosing all types of skin diseases. For this purpose, the new curriculum for Sri Lankan Dermatologists provides dermatological training for the one year outside Sri Lanka.

Indeed - the incidence of a lot of diseases is very different in different parts of the world. For example, a young postgraduate in Sri Lanka has nearly no chance to see patients with malignant melanoma within a few years of training. But a young German doctor - has he a chance to see

¹Fachklinik Hornheide an der westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany.

leprosy, other mycobacterial infections, or chromomycosis within his first years, without a look outside Germany?

To be allround dermatologists, we have the possibility to learn from each other and with each other.

References

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