

First visiting lecturer for the new postgraduate training programme in dermatology in Sri Lanka

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On June 1st 2000 the new postgraduate training programme in Dermatology has started in Sri Lanka. From now on young physicians can immediately start with the training programme in Dermatology after finishing the University Medical Course. More than 180 doctors applied for a place in this programme, however, only 8 of them could be accepted after passing a strong selection process. In a 3-year-course they will be trained on all fields of Dermatology. In the first two years the physicians will work in one of the teaching hospitals for Dermatology at Colombo, Kandy and Galle. Then the residents will spend the third year abroad in a respected Department of Dermatology.

One and a half year ago, Dr Gunther Schwenzer, a Dermatologist from Hamburg who is honorary member of the Sri Lanka Association of Dermatology (SLAD), announced in Germany that the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine of the University of Colombo was looking for a visiting lec-

turer in Dermatology. I applied for this position, because I am very interested to get to know Dermatology in various countries in the world, and moreover, I wanted to enlarge my knowledge in tropical Dermatology. Therefore, it was a great honour for me to be the first visiting lecturer participating in this new training programme in Dermatology in Sri Lanka.

I arrived in Colombo on June 3rd, 2000. During my stay I spent most of the time I spent in Sri Lanka, working at the Department of Dermatology, General Hospital Colombo. Once a week, the new residents in Dermatology came there, and I gave lecturing discussions to them. According to my favourite field, I especially trained them in immunodermatology. I held lectures on lupus erythematosus, scleroderma, vasculitis, bullous autoimmune diseases, urticaria and angioedema, atopic dermatitis and contact eczema. I was impressed by the high level of knowledge in general medicine the young doctors had, and by

their ability and motivation to learn new things. The other days of the week I participated in the clinical rounds on the wards and in the outpatient department. This was very interesting to me because I could see skin disorders which are very rare or absent in Europe like leprosy, and I saw skin disorders which do occur in my country as well, however, the frequency is much less e.g. pemphigus vulgaris.

The advantage of the new training programme is that in a few years the poor number of dermatologists in Sri Lanka will rapidly grow, and therefore, the basic care in dermatology for the general population will improve. Another important advantage is the fact that all residents will be involved in a research programme. However, at the moment the research will focus more or less on clinical studies due to missing technical equipment. However, the results of this studies will give more insight in prevalence, aetiology and treatment modalities of skin disorders in Sri Lanka and can help to improve the situation.

During my stay the Annual Meeting of the Sri Lanka Association of Dermatology took place in Kandy on June 11th. The meeting was similar to regional meetings in my country, although the number of participants was much less. However, the clinical presentation showed a high level of interesting and rare cases. Another highlight during my stay in Sri Lanka was a short visit to the teaching hospital in Galle, where I was asked to give a lecture on vasculitis to the postgraduates. At the end of my time, I gave a lecture on UV-

mediated skin diseases to the members of the SLAD. I was very impressed that most of the dermatologists of Sri Lanka came to Colombo for this event.

I had the opportunity to see how Dermatology is growing in Sri Lanka. I know that much work was done by Dr. Perera and Dr. Atukorale over the last year to establish the new training programme, and also to improve the technical equipment in the Department of Dermatology at the General Hospital of Colombo. They just received a UV-machine for phototherapy and a Nd-Yag-laser.

I was pleased to see again Dr Chandini, who is now Head of the Department, of Dermatology in Anuradhapura. She fulfilled the third year of her training programme in Dermatology at the Department of Dermatology, Free University of Berlin, Germany, and finished this year. I hope that the exchange of colleagues working in Dermatology between Sri Lanka and Germany will continue. I am sure that this will result in great advantages for both sides.

Beside all my professional activities I got the opportunity to see parts of the beautiful landscape of Sri Lanka, and I visited some of the most important historical monuments the country has. I thank all colleagues whom I meet for their kindness. In particular, I thank Dr. Perera and Dr. Atukorale for their support and hospitality. Taken together, for me this stay in Sri Lanka represents an unforgettable experience.

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