

PERSPECTIVE I

Strengthening geriatric medicine in Sri Lanka – A global perspective

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It is both an honour and a privilege to serve as the International Advisor for the *Sri Lanka Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology*. This inaugural issue marks a significant milestone in the country's medical publishing landscape: the launch of a biannual journal dedicated to advancing the science and practice of aging. I am excited and full of hope that the high quality, peer-reviewed original research, comprehensive review articles and illuminating case reports within this *Journal* will inspire clinical innovation and progress in the field of Geriatrics and Gerontology.

The timing of this launch could not be more critical. Sri Lanka, like many nations across the globe, is experiencing a demographic shift marked by a rapidly aging population. According to recent projections, by 2042 almost one out of every four people in Sri Lanka is expected to be aged over 60 years. We need to face this demographic transformation as both a challenge and an opportunity for the healthcare system. It demands a recalibration of our clinical priorities, reimagining our service delivery models and renewing our commitment to evidence-based care tailored to the specific needs of older adults in Sri Lanka and beyond.

In this context, the *Sri Lanka Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology* serves as a vital platform for knowledge exchange. It is not only a repository of scientific inquiry but also a catalyst for professional development and interdisciplinary collaboration. While the *Journal* will undoubtedly be of particular interest to geriatricians, its relevance extends far beyond our specialty. Physicians in family practice, internal medicine and other medical specialties will increasingly encounter older patients with complex needs in their outpatient clinics and on their wards. Nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, pharmacists and other allied health professionals are equally integral to the care of this population. This *Journal* will engage a broad readership and help build a shared understanding of aging-related issues and promote holistic, person-centred care.

My own engagement with Sri Lanka's geriatric medicine community has been deeply enriching. In September 2025, I had the opportunity to visit the country and participate in the 58th Anniversary Annual Academic Sessions of the Ceylon College of Physicians. I was delighted to see Geriatrics featured prominently in the conference programme, with a dedicated symposium that addressed key topics such as dementia-related comorbidities, polypharmacy and frailty. The session sparked lively discussions and thoughtful debate, underscoring the growing recognition of aging as a central concern in clinical practice.

One of the most memorable aspects of the conference was the networking session with fellow geriatricians. It was inspiring to meet clinicians who have been instrumental in developing the specialty in Sri Lanka, often in the face of limited resources and systemic challenges. The Sri Lankan Association of Geriatric Medicine has played a pivotal role in this journey, advocating for the integration of geriatric medicine as a specialty into mainstream healthcare and supporting the professional growth of its members. The passion, perseverance and strategic vision demonstrated was truly commendable. There were many ideas on how the specialty could further develop over the coming years, I hope this *Journal* will provide a vehicle to continue this constructive discussion.

During my visit, I also had the privilege of visiting the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo, where I was introduced to the newly established Geriatric Clinic and several medical wards. The clinic represents a significant step forward in the provision of specialised care for older adults. It reflects a growing awareness of the need for dedicated services that address the multifaceted nature of aging – from identification and management of frailty, chronic disease and multimorbidity, to addressing functional and cognitive decline by offering not just effective evidence-based medical interventions, but also of equal importance, comprehensive psychosocial support and future care

planning. On the medical wards I saw clear commitment to improving outcomes for older patients, with doctors and nurses striving to balance clinical efficacy, caseload volume and complexity with compassion and dignity.

The role of the geriatrician will be central to the future of healthcare in Sri Lanka. As the population ages, the demand for skilled professionals who can navigate the complexities of multimorbidity, frailty, cognitive impairment and social vulnerability will only increase. Geriatricians are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. We should embrace this privileged role not just through our direct patient care, but also by seeking out every opportunity to shape policy, educate the next generation of clinicians and drive research that informs best practice.

To meet this demand, there must be crucial investment in the development of a robust and resilient workforce. Geriatric medicine should be recognised as a cornerstone of both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. Medical students must be introduced early to the principles of aging, including the biopsychosocial model of care, the importance of comprehensive geriatric assessment and the ethical considerations that often arise in our practice. Postgraduate training should build on this foundation, offering rigorous clinical experiences, mentorship and opportunities for scholarly engagement.

I was fortunate to witness this commitment to excellence during my role as External Examiner for the MD in Geriatric Medicine at the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine. The examination process was exemplary in its depth and breadth. Candidates were assessed not only

on their clinical acumen but also on their ability to deliver holistic care, communicate effectively with patients and families and apply ethical reasoning to complex scenarios. The curriculum emphasises the importance of up to date knowledge of current literature and evidence base, interdisciplinary collaboration and reflective practice – all hallmarks of high quality geriatric training and practice. It was heartening to see the programme producing board-certified geriatricians who are well equipped to lead and innovate in our field.

The *Sri Lanka Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology* will play a vital part in elevating these efforts. By publishing high impact research, facilitating dialogue among stakeholders and highlighting innovative models of care, the *Journal* can serve as a beacon for progress. It can also foster international collaboration, enabling Sri Lanka to learn from global best practices while contributing its own insights to the broader geriatric medicine community.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the editorial board, contributors and supporters of this inaugural issue. Your work represents a bold and necessary step toward improving the lives of older adults in Sri Lanka. As we embark on this new chapter with the *Sri Lanka Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology*, I look forward to the continued growth of our specialty and the strengthening of international collaboration. Together, we can advance the science and practice of aging well and ensure that older adults in Sri Lanka receive the compassionate, comprehensive care they deserve.
