

2023/2024

NEWSLETTER VOL. 10 ISSUE 3



SLALAS



SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION FOR LABORATORY ANIMAL SCIENCE



IN THIS ISSUE



THE SPECIAL ISSUE TAKES YOU THROUGH PRE-CONFERENCE COURSES, WORKSHOPS
AND
THE 11TH ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS OF THE
SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION OF LABORATORY ANIMAL SCIENCE

eISBN: 978-624-5640-10-2

DOI: https://doi.org/10.61943/slalas.0320242_i

Two-day Course on Zebrafish as an Alternative Model

Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara

For the first time, the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS) has organised a two-day course on “Zebrafish as an Alternative Model”. The course was organised in collaboration with the Medical Research Institute (MRI), Sri Lanka College of Veterinary Surgeons (SLCVS), 3Rs Centre in Laboratory Animal Science in Sri Lanka, and the Society for Alternatives to Animal Testing in Sri Lanka (SAAT-SL). It was successfully conducted on the 16th and 17th of December 2023.

Online lectures were conducted by Prof. Mangala Gunatilake, Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage, Dr. Prasadi de Silva, and Dr. Samanthika Jagoda on the 16th December and the hands-on practical session was held at the MRI on the 17th December. Resource persons for the practical session included Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage, Dr. Ramani Karunakaran, and Mr. Gayan Deshapriya.



During the practical sessions at the MRI

Altogether 25 participants registered and completed the course. Among these participants, there were 11 undergraduates (from USJP, UWU, UOJ, Ocean University, KIU, NSBM, and Lincoln University College), 7 postgraduates (from USJP and IBMBB), 2 veterinarians, 3 academics (from EUSL and Open University) and 2 others who were not affiliated. Participants were very satisfied with the knowledge and skills they gained during the course and appreciated the effort taken in organising this course. SLCVS awarded 2 Continuous Professional Development credit points to veterinarians who attended the course. A certificate was awarded to all the participants at the end of the practical session.



Group photo with the participants

Pre-Conference Workshop on Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara

The Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS) organised a fulfilling Pre-Conference workshop in collaboration with the Department of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, and Centre for Research Development and Innovation (CRDI), University of Colombo. The one-day workshop was held as an onsite event on the 12th of January 2024 at the Department of Physiology, Level 6, UCFM Tower, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo.

Prof. Mangala Gunatilake gave the overall introduction on the Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. Prof. Ranil Jayewardene conducted an in-detailed lecture on Systematic Review which was then followed by a Group activity with the participants. This activity centred on developing a research question based on an identified area, searching for information using identified keywords, selecting abstracts, and learning how and what information to extract from a published paper. Following the lunch break, Prof. Priyanga Ranasinghe covered the area of Meta-analysis and discussed how to conduct one.



Altogether 11 participants were registered and completed the workshop. The participants were undergraduates, postgraduates, and university lecturers from UOC, USJP, Wayamba University, Rajarata University, UOP, and Open University. Participants were very satisfied with the knowledge and experience they gained. A certificate was awarded to all the participants at the end of the workshop.

Pre-Conference Workshop on Microbiological Monitoring and Genetic Monitoring of Laboratory Animals

Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara

The Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS) was pleased to organise this Pre-Conference Workshop on the 5th and 6th of January 2024 in collaboration with the Medical Research Institute (MRI).

On the first day, online lectures were conducted by Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage. The lectures covered the basic information, background, and methodology on how to conduct Microbiological and Genetic Monitoring of Laboratory Animals. Practical sessions were conducted at the Animal Centre, MRI on the second day. These sessions were based on cadavre demonstrations on how to conduct genetic monitoring (through skin drafting techniques) and microbiological monitoring. Resource persons for the practical session included Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage and Dr. Ramani Karunakaran.



Altogether 16 participants were registered and completed the course. Among the participants, there were 06 undergraduates (from UWU, KIU, and Spectrum Institute) and 10 postgraduates (from USJP, and UOP). Participants were very satisfied with the knowledge and experience they gained during the workshop. A certificate was awarded to all the participants at the end of the practical session.

The 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and International Conference of the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science

Chedliya Ishak Sahabdeen

The 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and International Conference of the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS) convened at the Hilton Colombo on January 20th and 21st, 2024, focusing on 'Openness, Transparency, and Accountability in Laboratory Animal Science - The Unmet Need.'



Dancers leading the procession during the Inauguration



The Procession inclusive of the Mace

The distinguished guest lineup included the Chief Guest Emeritus Prof. Patricia V Turner (Corporate Vice President, Global Animal Welfare, Charles River Laboratories) from Canada, along with Guests of Honor Prof. Cynthia Pekow, Immediate Past President of the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science (US) and Emeritus Prof. Vera Baumans of Utrecht University (Netherlands), alongside Guest speakers Prof. Arvind Ingle, Chair- South Asian region of ICLAS (India), Dr. Suresh Poosala, Founder of Acasta Health & Oncoseek Bio Pvt. Ltd. (India), Dr. Patrick Sharp, Executive Director, Department of Animal Research and Veterinary Services, University of California, USA, and Prof. Cholawat Pacharinsak, Director of Veterinary Anaesthesia, Analgesia and Surgery, Department of Comparative Medicine, Stanford University, USA. Our special invitees for the event were Dr. Vijith Gunasekara, Director, Medical Research Institute, Dr. D. S. Kodikara of New Animal Clinic, Kohuwela, Nugegoda, Prof. Dilan Satharasinghe, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, University of Peradeniya, and Dr. M. Ijas, President, Sri Lanka Veterinary Association



Lighting of the Traditional oil lamp by the Chief Guest, Guests of Honour, South Asian region Chair of ICLAS and the President

The conference aimed to foster dialogue on advancing laboratory animal care and accountability, marking a milestone with the first procession of the Mace of SLALAS, symbolizing recognition for its role in promoting animal research in Sri Lanka. Prof. Mangala Gunatilake, SLALAS's founder, concluded her second tenure with a focus on collaboration for scientific progress.

Chief Guest Emeritus Professor Patricia V Turner addressed the significance of the 'Openness Agreement,' stressing its critical role in ensuring accountability in animal science. Guest of Honor Prof. Cynthia Pekow highlighted the importance of mutual learning, while Emeritus Prof. Vera Baumans emphasized the value of such conferences as platforms for exchanging scientific ideas. The overarching message underscored collaboration as vital for growth in scientific research.

Prof. Gunatilake's Presidential Address explored research using laboratory animals in her academic journey, the impact of the global pandemic on laboratory animals, and the pivotal role of animal research in Nobel Prizes, marking the conclusion of the Inauguration ceremony.

The second session commenced with Emeritus Prof. Patricia V Turner delivering the first Keynote Address on 'Artificial Intelligence in the vivarium: Promise or Peril.' This was followed by Prof. Cynthia Pekow's talk on 'Openness Around Animal Research.' Each speaker received Tokens of Appreciation.



President, Chief Guest, Guests of Honour delivering their Welcome Addresses

After lunch, the free paper session with Prof. Mangala Gunatilake and Dr. Krishanthi Premarathne serving as Chairpersons; featured young investigators presenting their undergraduate research. Dr. Suresh Poosala then gave a guest speech on '3D printing of cells and organoids, highlighting the 3Rs: replacement, reduce, and refinement'. Prof. Turner, Prof. Cynthia, and Dr. Poosala were presented with honorary memberships of SLALAS considering their great contributions to the lab animal field locally and internationally. Day 1 concluded with e-poster presentations.

The second day commenced with Emeritus Prof. Vera Baumans delivering the third Keynote Address on 'Balancing the Use of Animals in Research and Society Concerns'. Following this, Dr. Patrick Sharp presented the second Guest Speech on 'Planning and Designing the Green Vivarium: Towards more Sustainable Biomedical Research'. After morning tea, an Anesthesia symposium was conducted, overseen by Prof. Pacharinsak and Dr. Sharp.

The free paper sessions-II continued post-lunch, with Prof. Mangala Gunatilake and Prof. Tharanga Thoradeniya serving as Chairpersons. Prof. Ingle then spoke on 'Feeding and Nutrition of laboratory rodents', followed by Dr. Thammitiyagodage addressing 'The

Challenging Role of Laboratory Animal Veterinarians: The Sri Lankan Scenario', shedding light on issues faced by Sri Lankan veterinarians.

The conference concluded with an awards ceremony recognising winners, followed by the AGM, where President-Elect Dr. Sachini Amarasekara assumed office for the upcoming year (2024/2025).



Keynote speakers: Chief Guest Emeritus Prof. Patricia V. Turner; Guest of Honour, Prof. Cynthia Pekow and Guest of Honour, Emeritus Prof. Vera Baumans



Presenting Tokens of Appreciation, Proceedings of the Conference and Certificates following Keynote speeches to the Chief Guest and Guests of Honour



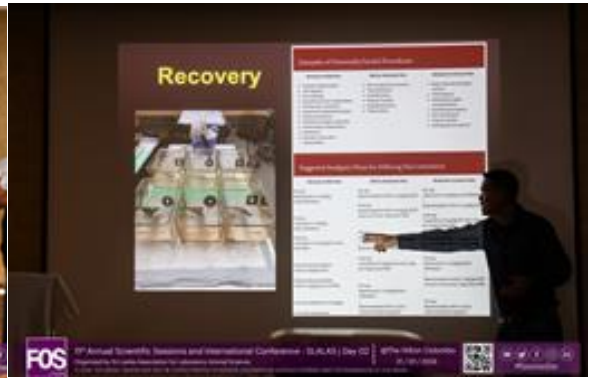
Guest speakers: Dr. Suresh Poosala, Dr. Patrick Sharp, Prof. Arvind Ingle and Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage



Presenting Tokens of Appreciation, Certificates and Proceedings to Guest Speakers



Presenting the Honorary membership of SLALAS to Prof. Patricia Turner, Prof. Cynthia Peckow, and Dr. Suresh Poosala



Snapshots from the Anaesthesia Symposium conducted by Prof. Cholawat Pacharinsak and Dr. Patrick Sharp

Inception of a Laboratory Animal Science Exhibition in Sri Lanka

Piyumika Yapa

The most captivating activity of 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and International Conference of the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science held on 20th and 21st January at The Hilton, Colombo, was the exhibition on 'Laboratory Animal Science'. It was a remarkable milestone in the history of SLALAS as well as in the history of laboratory animal science (LAS) in Sri Lanka because this was the first and foremost exhibition on LAS discipline in Sri Lanka. This idea was conceptualised by the President, Prof. Mangala Gunatilake and the exhibition was declared open on 20th January 2024 by the Chief Guest, Emeritus Professor Patricia V. Turner, Corporate Vice President, Global Animal Welfare, Charles River and University Professor Emerita, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.



*Emeritus Prof. Patricia Turner
declaring it open*



Posters on display at the venue

The following exhibits were displayed at the event:

- Educational items developed by five students in the first batch of the Postgraduate Diploma course in Laboratory Animal Science conducted by the Department of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Posters on commonly used laboratory animal models
- Submissions for the art competition
- Submissions for the poster competition
- Submissions for the photography competition



Prof Vera Baumans viewing the displays

The exhibition was a valuable educational experience for all the participants; especially for freshers in the field of LAS. All participants including guests, foreign delegates, researchers, abstract presenters and students appreciated this exhibition as it was a novel idea which enhances the interest towards LAS discipline.



Roundtable Discussion on Challenges and Future Directions of Laboratory Animal Keeping

Sachini Amarasekara and Prasadi de Silva

A roundtable discussion on “Challenges and Future Directions of Laboratory Animal Keeping” was held on the second day of the 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and International Conference showcasing the views / ideas of 3 technical officers (TOs): Mr. Gayan Deshapriya, Medical Research Institute, Colombo 08, Mr. Manjula Danasekara, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science, University of Peradeniya, and Ms. Thulari Ariyathilake, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayawardenapura. The session focused on the challenges faced by TOs in addition to the common financial issues faced by any developing country, training opportunities available & work performance appraisal, opportunities for communicating with others, and impact of Compassion Fatigue.



Lack of knowledge, inadequate understanding and cooperation between co-workers, were stated as challenges faced by most. The TOs also found it challenging to handle students with poor attitudes along with irresponsible ones who left cages unattended after their work had been completed. They also revealed that the poor hygiene of workers, carelessness, and non-compliance to safety measures has led to occupational health hazards. They requested SLALAS to provide more training opportunities and spread awareness on humane

According to Sri Lankan government policies and recruitment protocols, recruitment of lab animal staff to government universities / institutes takes place under the general laboratory staff recruitment category and sometimes is highly influenced by politics. This results in enlistment of a set of unqualified or dispassionate people in lab animal facilities. Unqualified / untrained persons can significantly increase the stress levels of animals while handling them and this becomes stressful for peers. Therefore, all three TOs highlighted the importance of tailor-made recruitment methods when recruiting animal house staff to avoid the suffering of both animals and the staff. They also requested a special training for animal house workers in addition to the general lab safety training they receive upon acceptance of duties.



Physical and emotional exhaustion due to the repeated exposure to emotionally challenging jobs such as euthanasia, long working hours etc., can lead to *Compassion Fatigue* in people working at the animal facilities. Ms. Thulari mentioned that during her struggle to combat *Compassion Fatigue* she found doing yoga to be very helpful. She also revealed that she always tries to share her feelings with a select group of people to ease her pain. Moreover, Ms. Thulari said that her institution organises an annual almsgiving to pass merit to the animals who have sacrificed their lives for research, which has immensely helped her in maintaining the emotional balance. Mr. Gayan stated that it is easy for him to make his mind when he thinks that the animals will stop suffering when sacrificed. He also mentioned that he is committed to keep the animals happy during their stay at the facility and it helps him ease his pain. Mr. Manjula said that he rarely undergoes *Compassion Fatigue* as his facility hands over retired animals for adaptation.

Finally, the audience consisting of some of the top LAS experts appreciated the honest views shared by the technical officers and suggested having programs to identify and appreciate the best technician to encourage them to do better. This session was included in the programme as a novel concept proposed by the President, Prof. Mangala Gunatilake which was moderated by Dr. Sachini Amarasekara and Dr. Prasadi de Silva, from the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo.

SLALAS Award Ceremony

Anusha Senevirathne

We are delighted to bring the curtains down on yet another successful chapter of the 11th Annual Scientific sessions and the International Conference, culminating in a momentous Awards ceremony held on 21st of January 2024 at the Hilton, Colombo, celebrating the outstanding contribution from our participants in the scope of Art, Photography and Poster competitions, and Oral and Poster presentations. The evening unfolded with the sense of anticipation and excitement as we honoured the talented individuals who demonstrated exemplary creativity and scholarly prowess throughout the year. Certificates were conferred upon all participants as a testament to their commendable contributions. Further underscoring the spirit of meritocracy, the winners were not only given with certificates but also received cash prizes and medals for their respective awards, recognising their outstanding accomplishments.

In the spirit of acknowledging the indelible contributions of laboratory animals to scientific research, SLALAS (Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science) organised a series of competitions as a novel introduction for the year 2023/2024. These competitions constituted posters, arts and photography showcase. Recognising the importance of nurturing curiosity and interest in laboratory animal research from an early stage, SLALAS opened these competitions to school students (Advanced Level), undergraduates, postgraduates and had an open category too. This novel introduction sought to not only celebrate the legacy of scientific achievements facilitated by these animals but also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for the ethical considerations surrounding their use in research. By providing a platform for researchers, scientists, and students to express their reflections on the ethical and humane treatment of laboratory animals, we aim to stimulate meaningful conversations within our community.



The certificates and cash prizes for the winners were awarded by Prof. Mangala Gunatilake, President, SLALAS (2023/2024)

Poster Competition: “Speak for the Unspoken”

The first place winner of the poster competition held under the theme “Speak for the Unspoken” was Mr. K. Nimantha Wickramaratna, an Undergraduate from CINEC Campus, Malabe. Ms. P. Manuththara Hansani from KAATSU International University was awarded second place while Ms. Dharani Rathnayake, from Wayamba University came in third.

Art Competition

This category was an open invitation for thinkers and changemakers to explore their creativity, conveying messages of empathy and ethical treatment through their unique and imaginative expression. The winner was Ms. Sajini Senadhirathne, who competed under the Open Category.

Photography Competition

The photography competition was organised by the SLALAS in collaboration with the Medical Research Institute (MRI), Colombo. The winning photographs were selected on the basis of the participant's adept skill in capturing a singular, emotionally resonant moment within the lives of Laboratory Animals.

The first place winner of the competition was Mr. Muhammad Rislin Muhammad Rilwan, an undergraduate from Ocean University of Sri Lanka while Ms. A. M. Nilushika Dhananjani Senavirathne, an undergraduate from Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo was secured second place.



1st Place
Mr. M.R. Muhammad Rilwan
Ocean University, Sri Lanka



2nd Place
Ms. A.M. Nilushika Senavirathne
Faculty of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo

The Oncoseek Bio awards for the Best Oral and Poster presentations

The awards for the Best Oral and Poster presentations at the free paper sessions were sponsored by Oncoseek Bio Pvt. Ltd. Under this Ms. K.H.E. Fernando was awarded the first place for the poster titled “*In Vitro* Trypsin Inhibition Activity of Three Selected Edible Mushrooms in Sri Lanka”. The poster titled “Evaluation of Behavioural Changes in Wistar Rats on Sounds of Mobile Phones” presented by Ms. P.T.A. Thilakarathna came in second place while the third place was secured by Ms. J.M.N.J. Jayathilake for the poster on “Retrospective Analysis of Breeding Data from Inbred Mice Colonies Maintained in the Animal Centre, Medical Research Institute, Colombo 08”. Dr. Suresh Poosala, Founder, Acasta Health and Oncoseek Bio Pvt. Ltd, presented the winning certificates and cash prizes to the winners.

Oncoseek Bio Award Winners of the Poster Presentations



1st Place
Ms K.H.E. Fernando



2nd Place
Ms. P.T.A. Thilakarathna



**Dr. Mayuri Thammitiyagodage, Head,
Animal Centre – MRI, Colombo receiving
the certificate for the 3rd place on behalf
of Ms. J.M.N.J. Jayathilake**

Oncoseek Bio Award Winners of the Oral Presentations



1st Place
Ms M.E.N. Saumya



2nd Place
Ms K.K.K. Perera

The Oncoseek Bio Award for the Best Oral Presentation was won by Ms. M.E.N. Saumya and Ms. K.K.K. Perera for the first and second places respectively.

Dr. Shamini Jayasekara Award for the Best Oral Presentation

Dr. Shamini Jayasekara Award for best original research for the year 2023/2024 was won by Ms. K.K.K. Perera from University of Sri Jayewardenepura for her research work on “Screening of Zoo-chemical Analysis and *In Vivo* Toxicity in *Fromia indica* Crude Extract”.



Chief Guest of the event, Emeritus Prof. Patricia V. Turner awarding the certificate and cash prize to the winner of the Dr. Shamini Jayasekara Award, Ms. K. K. K. Perera

Emeritus Professor Vera Baumans Award for the “Best Journal Publication in Laboratory Animal Science”

Dr. Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara, PhD candidate from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo received the Emeritus Professor Vera Baumans Award – 2023 for the first time at the 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and the International Conference, for her original research publication: “Detection of immunity in sheep following anti-rabies vaccination”. This accolade will be awarded annually commencing from 2024.



Emeritus Prof. Vera Baumans presenting the award to the winner Dr. Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara

We extend our warm wishes to all the participants and winners, and we express our appreciation to everyone who contributed to making this commemorative initiative a resounding success. As we celebrate the achievement of our competition winners, let us extend our gratitude to laboratory animals whose sacrifices have paved the way for such groundbreaking discoveries. The commitment and talent showcased in these competitions underscore our shared responsibility to honor, respect, and advocate for the ethical treatment of laboratory animals.

Novelties introduced in the Year 2023/2024

A. Inauguration Ceremony of the Conference

- Mace of SLALAS
- President's Garland

B. Educational Activities

- Pre-conference 2-day ZF course
- Pre-conference workshop on microbiological monitoring and genetic monitoring
- Anaesthesia symposium during the conference (first ever symposium held in a SLALAS conference)
- Poster presentations
- LAS Exhibition
- Roundtable discussion

C. Introducing Competitions

- Poster, Art and Photography Competitions

D. New Awards

- Emeritus Professor Vera Baumans Award for the Best Journal Publication
- Short presentation related to the published work by the awardee following the receipt of the award
- Oncoseek Bio (Private) Ltd. sponsored medals for the best oral and poster presentations and cash awards for the 1st & 2nd places in oral presentations and 1st, 2nd & 3rd places in poster presentations

E. Publications with DOI Numbers

E-copies of Conference proceedings and Newsletter Volume 10 Issues 1- 3

SLALAS 11th Conference Comments column

The 11th Annual Scientific Sessions and International Conference was a great success. This conference was enriched with the participation of seven world renowned international researchers in the field in the capacity of Keynote and Guest Speakers. Additionally, the participation of Head/Animal Centre of Medical Research Institute as a Guest Speaker added information relevant to the local scenario. Once the conference was concluded, I requested their views on the Conference and suggestions for the future to be included in the 2023 Volume 10 issue 3 of the SLALAS Newsletter. I am sharing the responses as received for you to learn more from these.

Prof. Mangala Gunatilake
Founder President - SLALAS
President for 2023/2024



Dear Professor Mangala,

As Charles River was a meeting co-sponsor it is not appropriate for me to provide a meeting endorsement or review.
Thank you for your understanding.

Pat



Dear Mangala,

Congratulations to you and your SLALAS colleagues for an excellent meeting. Especially lovely to witness was the participation of students, animal care staff, and researchers in a format that encouraged open interaction. I thank you for the kind treatment provided to the guests including the splendid opening ceremony (what a delightful surprise!) and the attention to details that made the venue so welcoming. I learned a great deal of useful information from listening to the talks and discussions and interacting with the speakers and attendees.

You have asked for suggestions to include in your next SLALAS newsletter. In keeping with the meeting theme of openness, I suggest SLALAS encourage this topic remain a consideration among your members. SLALAS might promote continued structured discussions on openness (online or in person), for example to learn if this is a topic SLALAS members feel a priority to pursue and if so, which steps to undertake to move along the process.

The SLALAS website could link to or feature some of the examples of openness that are freely available on the internet. For example, some of the research interviews on the EARA site, and some of the virtual laboratory tours available from several sites in the UK. (links are provided below). Some of these videos provide great examples for discussion.

SLALAS could participate in Global #GetOnBOARD day with EARA. Americans for Medical Progress can provide free kits to assist with having a Biomedical Research Awareness Day if any SLALAS members wishes to try such a day at their research institution, for example to promote in-reach to the personnel who work at the institution but are not directly involved in aspects of animal research. They could then report on the experience to SLALAS.

My hope is that SLALAS members will appreciate the benefits of openness to promote the important work we do to all those who benefit from advances in science and medicine. Additionally, I hope that openness will increase the sense of pride SLALAS members feel in their work (part of a culture of care), and attract more bright minds to join in scientific pursuits.

I sincerely thank you and SLALAS for this opportunity to participate and share and learn.

Wishing you continued success,
Cindy

Cynthia Pekow, DVM, DACLAM, CPIA
Chief, Veterinary Medical Unit
Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System
1660 S. Columbian Way, Seattle, Washington 98108 USA
Office 206-764-2448

- European Animal Research Association www.eara.eu
- Understanding Animal Research
www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk
- Virtual tours <https://www.labanimaltour.org>
- Americans for Medical Progress, Biomedical Research Awareness Day www.amprogress.org

The SLALAS website could link to or feature some of the examples of openness that are freely available on the internet. For example, some of the research interviews on the EARA site, and some of the virtual laboratory tours available from several sites in the UK. (links are provided below). Some of these videos provide great examples for discussion.



Dear Mangala,

It was a great meeting with good presentations and fruitful discussions! The roundtable with the animal care staff was a great and useful part in the Conference. How brave that the 3 members of the animal staff came up with the problems they encounter in their daily work and how recognizable!
Everywhere animal staff has these problems!

I enjoyed the opening ceremony very much! It was impressive and very special; we don't have that in our part of the world. It was great with the musicians and Kandyan dancers!

Concerning the topics of Openness and Transparency I would advocate that openness to the public has two sides, one to communicate new research findings and medical progress, but also to communicate new alternatives/non -animal research methods as we heard in the excellent presentation of Dr. Poosala and discussions on Animal Welfare.

Concerning the posters on mouse, rat, hamster etc, I would suggest to make new posters with more advanced information on housing, more in line with legislation and recommendations.

I appreciated very much Dr. Mayuri's presentation on the animal facility with openness about the encountered problems. Sometimes we forget in our Western world that we have faced the same problems.

I feel deep respect for what you have achieved in Sri Lanka and for the struggle sometimes to continue your good work!

I thank you and SLALAS with my whole heart for the invitation to join the conference and wish SLALAS a great future with lots of success!

Kind regards,
Vera Baumans



Hi Mangala,

I greatly enjoyed the meeting and feel that I benefited from learning more about your organization and meeting a large number of attendees. Due to the close nature of the meeting, I had the opportunity to have many 1:1 discussions with the speakers and for attendees to interact with me.

I particularly enjoyed the session with the supervisors/facility managers asking for input regarding how to manage their staff and staff commitment to their animal care and use program. I would encourage you keep some element of this in future meetings as well as having some sort of Technician of the Year award to reward the behaviour that you want to see in Animal Care Technicians.

As we discussed, some sort of pre- or post-meeting workshop could be offered on a special topic. For the special topic, you may be able to take advantage of the overseas speakers' knowledge. Perhaps a post-meeting would be best so that the presenter can expand upon the material presented at the meeting and there is time for this information to sink in and generate great discussions. Additionally, the speaker may benefit from a tour of local animal facilities/operations to better understand what to present in the post-meeting workshop.

Another possibility is to investigate the possibility of recording the presenters' presentations if possible (material like Suresh's may be proprietary and therefore not possible). This will expand the usefulness of the presenter's material into the future.

Overall, the meeting was fantastic and I cannot thank you enough for your generous hospitality. If you're interested in pursuing a small vivarium workshop at some point, do let me know and let's what we can do.

If there are any additional suggestions I think of, I'll drop you an email.

Best regards,

Patrick Sharp



Views expressed by Dr. Suresh Poosala when I met him at the Hilton Colombo on 22nd January 2024.

You have organised a wonderful conference which I enjoyed very much. I assure you that I participate in your conference annually and sponsor oral and poster presentation awards.

I would like to suggest you open the conference free of charge to attract more participation in the future. Next time I will join the adventures following the conference.

Dear Dr. Gunatilake



I congratulate you and your team for conducting a wonderful meeting on Openness.

We really enjoyed your warm hospitality and scientific interactions with members of SLALAS.

When we joined the field of LAS in India way back in 1993, we also went through the same pain your LAS community is going through now. With the existing LAS Professionals and leaders at that time, we have strived hard to some extent to improve the human resource as well as LAS in our country. However, we have a long way to go until the benefits reach the last person/ institution at the same time we provide services like CRO to others nationally as well as internationally.

In order to keep up the tempo of the SLALAS and improve the LAS in the country, I suggest initiating webinars on various subjects lacking expertise in the country. As usual, I am ready to shoulder the responsibility to deliver some of the talks of my expertise. This will help to raise the human resources at first. The new generation who can afford, can register for the diploma/ degree courses in LAS. This will further help to improve the expertise who can in turn help others to upgrade their knowledge. This can be achieved by tapping the funding agencies who partially/ completely fund the expenses of the candidates. ICLAS can be one such agency. Along with the Veterinarians, it is equally important to upgrade the knowledge of the Technicians who take care of the laboratory animals on a day-to-day basis.

Forming a group of such people and bringing them on one platform for sensitizing them about the importance of their work, will certainly help improve the LAS in the country. The interactive session with the Technicians in the 11th conference of SLALAS was a step forward in this direction.

My experience is that use of commercial feed is more economical nowadays if there are organised efforts from all Animal Facilities to use commercial feed rather making their own feed. You can certainly sensitise the stake holders about this so that it is viable for a vendor who supplies the animal feed.

I sincerely hope that the suggestions from the international faculty will definitely help SLALAS to improve the LAS in the country.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ingle



Hi Mangala,

My suggestions are:

- Conducting more informal workshops to let attendees to participate more during the workshops.
- For poster presentation, if the posters can be printed, it would be easier to score. There were many technical issues during presentations with IT personnel.

Therefore, it was difficult to follow/score posters appropriately.

Thanks,
Cholawat



Dear Mangala,

Thanks for getting views from the speakers for further improvements. I would like to thank you and Exco for organising this conference very successfully and getting world-class speakers for the event. It is a difficult task these days due to various constraints.

We could have organised a workshop on Anaesthesia together with the two speakers who had plenty of experience. Getting them down from such a long distance and sending them back without utilising their knowledge in a country like Sri Lanka where we need such technical upliftment is a waste. Anyway, thank you very much for your effort in raising the necessary funds and providing the opportunity for us to learn from them.

I believe Dr. Patrick is an expert on vivarium construction and management. I was keen to take him to show our vivarium at MRI to get his views in order to further improve the facility. However, due to other arrangements pertaining to his visit we were not able to discuss matters further. Unfortunately, I was not able to join the dinner with the foreign delegates due to other commitments so I missed out on the chance to discuss these topics further.

I had some time to talk to Dr. Ingle at tea breaks and was able to get his opinion regarding our feed production unit. I am sure he has a lot to contribute in terms of his expertise.

I would like to thank Dr. Poosala for his very informative presentations, and for giving Oncoseek awards for our young researchers. It is indeed a great encouragement for both students and supervisors. As supervisors, we feel that we are doing the right thing by our students when we receive feedback like this where the small things that we did with limited resources has been recognised. I am really happy about this initiative and have utmost respect to him for this.

I appreciate the initiation of the Prof. Vera Baumans Award. She is an angel. Angels should be recognised by our Association.

The lecture on artificial intelligence was very good and informative. Now we know what technical advancement are being used in huge breeding facilities where they keep a large number of animals. It is too difficult to check individual cages to assess the status of bedding material. We are still capable of doing it as our routine duty but we are currently living in a technical era and need to adapt as such.

Prof. Cynthia is such a down-to-earth person. She enjoyed every bit of the scientific sessions. She was not somebody new to me as I have listened to her presentations at AFLAS scientific sessions in Singapore as well. Her lectures are fantastic. The support she extended via ICLAS is amazing. The way she tried to identify and interact with all the participants was very commendable and she tried her best to help us out. She is another angel I came to know in lab animal science.

My final comment is that we should open our scientific sessions to more people in the future because it is not an easy task to get down high level speakers continuously. You have been able to do that and I hope you will continue this good practice in the future as well. Now that some of these speakers are in the SLALAS family, I am sure they will help us in our future activities as well.

With warm regards,

Mayuri

Strategic Serenity: Crafting the Perfect Post-Conference Escape

Anusha Senevirathne

After the whirlwind of a conference, the need for rejuvenation is somewhat paramount. The post-conference getaway, was an explorative journey in observing professionals transforming from conference attendees to adventure seekers. Through this journey, we were able to discover the art of crafting the perfect escape, balancing relaxation with exploration.

Embarking on an enchanting expedition through the heart of the Hill Country, our journey commenced on the 22nd of January 2024, under the patronage of Prof. Mangala Gunatilake and graced by the presence of our international delegates, Prof. Cynthia A. Pekow, Prof. Cholawat Pacharinsak and Dr. Patrick Sharp. Dr. Hasanthi Rathnadiwakara, Dr. Anusha Senevirathne and Ms. Piyumika Yapa joined them on this journey too. As we ventured forth, guided by a shared spirit of curiosity and reverence for nature's splendor, we were poised to unravel the secrets hidden within the verdant hills and misty valleys of this enchanting destination. From the tranquil tea plantations to the majestic waterfalls cascading down rugged cliffs, every step of our journey promised to unveil a new facet of Sri Lanka's captivating beauty.

As our journey carried us along the Colombo-South Highway, a thoroughfare etched amidst Sri Lanka's picturesque landscapes, our esteemed foreign delegates demonstrated an insatiable curiosity and profound appreciation for the wonders of Mother Nature. Their enthusiasm and wonderment ignited a collective sense of gratitude within us, reminding us of the extraordinary privilege of calling this paradise island: Home. From the melodious chirping of exotic birds to the intoxicating aroma of spices wafting through the air, every encounter served as a poignant reminder of the unparalleled beauty that surrounds us.

Our inaugural stop led us to the iconic Galle Fort, a bastion of history and a jewel of Sri Lanka's coastal heritage. We gazed upon its ancient ramparts, caressed by the gentle embrace of the natural sea breeze. The air was imbued with the salty tang of the Indian Ocean, carrying with it the whispers of a thousand maritime tales.



Embracing the serenity of the Indian Ocean at the ancient city of Galle

As we embarked on our journey towards enchanting Ella, nestled amidst the emerald hills of Sri Lanka, we were blessed with a serendipitous encounter of the natural beauty of Ravana Falls. Cascading gracefully down rugged cliffs, this natural wonder unveiled itself in all its splendor, captivating our senses and soothing our souls with its tranquil beauty. With the echoes of the water, we indulged in a leisurely lunch, allowing ourselves to be nourished not only by the delicious flavours that graced our palates but also by the rejuvenating tranquility that surrounded us.



The sun shines its golden rays upon the cascading waters of Ravana Falls...

Arriving at our much-anticipated destination in Ella, we found ourselves enveloped in the crisp embrace of the mountain air, a refreshing contrast to the warmth of the journey thus far. Eager to immerse ourselves in the essence of this enchanting locale, we indulged in the comforting warmth of a steaming cup of tea. As evening descended, we went to the Mahamewna Temple to pay homage to the Triple Gem. Under the watchful gaze of our culture and heritage, we found solace in the soul-stirring melodies of Pirith sermons, their resonant chants echoing through the hallowed halls like whispers of divine blessings.



Relishing with a warm cup of tea in Ella amidst the breeze of refreshing air

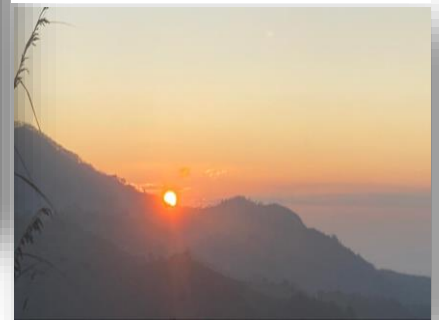


The splendid view of Mahamewna Temple as seen from Ella

Day two of our journey dawned with a promise of unparalleled adventure and discovery, as we set out before the break of dawn to embark on an unforgettable excursion to Little Adams Peak. With the first rays of sunlight, we were blessed with the breathtaking spectacle of a sunrise reflecting the wonders of nature that ignited our souls and left an indelible imprint on our hearts. The sun emerged from its slumber, casting its golden tendrils across the horizon and illuminating the landscape in a warm, ethereal glow.



Watching the sunrise by Little Adams Peak



Against the backdrop of verdant hills and azure skies, we stood in silent reverence, humbled by the sheer majesty of the moment. As we saw the same sense of amazement and contentment in the eyes of our foreign delegates, we felt that we had gifted them with a remarkable experience that would stay with them for a lifetime.

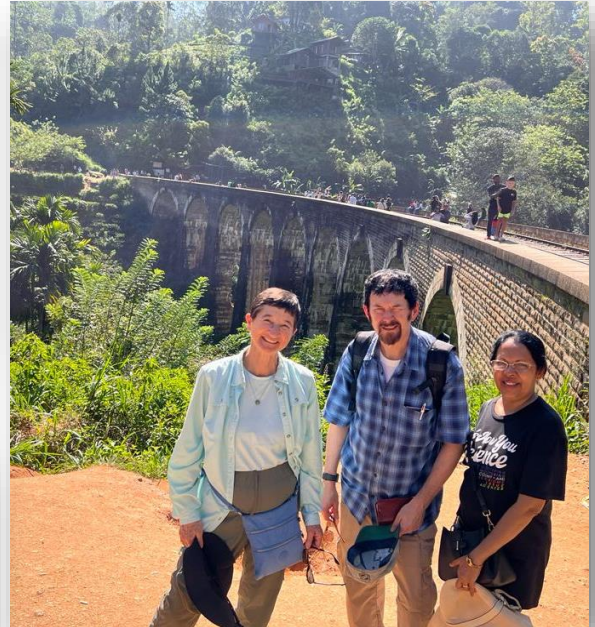


Enjoying the breathtaking moment of the sunrise at Little Adams Peak

Continuing our journey of exploration and wonder, we embarked on a quest to behold yet another marvel of Sri Lanka's rich heritage: the iconic Nine Arches Bridge. Nestled amidst the verdant hills of Ella, this architectural masterpiece stands as a testament to the ingenuity and craftsmanship of generations past.



*Quenching Our Thirst with Nature's Bounty:
Savouring King Coconut on the Road to the Nine
Arches Bridge*



*Nine Arches Bridge; Prof. Cynthia Pekow, Dr. Patrick
Sharp and Prof. Mangala Gunatilake*

After a day filled with unforgettable adventures and breathtaking moments, we found ourselves ready to indulge in another aspect of Sri Lanka's rich tapestry: its vibrant culinary scene. As dusk descended upon the bustling streets of Ella, we headed to tantalize our taste buds and delight our senses.



Ready to enjoy dinner!

As we continued our ascent towards Lipton's Seat, through the verdant Sri Lankan Hill Country, our delegation was treated to a captivating exploration of one of nation's most iconic treasures: its tea plantations. As we wound our way through the rolling landscapes, flanked by rows of

emerald-green tea bushes stretching as far as the eye could see, we could not help but be awestruck by the sheer scale and beauty of the tea cultivation that enveloped us. Our foreign delegates, hailing from distant corners of the globe, were spellbound by the delightful sight of the tea plantations, their wonderment palpable as they marveled at the meticulous care and cultivation that goes into producing the world-renowned Ceylon tea.



Embracing the Sri Lanka's rich tea resources: Lipton Seat, a scenic view point situated at the edge of Dambethenna Tea Estate

As our unforgettable journey drew to a close, we led towards the final leg of our adventure, setting our sights on the pristine wilderness of Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary. Nestled amidst the emerald landscapes of Sri Lanka's heartland, this sanctuary beckoned us with promises of breathtaking encounters with one of the island's most iconic treasures: the majestic tuskers, or elephants. With each passing moment, we were treated to intimate glimpses of animals, observing their intricate social dynamics enabling us to witness the rich biodiversity in Sri Lanka.



On the way to Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary we found ourselves blessed with an array of captivating encounters with Sri Lanka's rich and diverse wildlife



Met a great tusker on our way!

Our visit to Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary proved to be a stirring testament to the profound bond between humans and wildlife, as we were privileged to witness moments of care, compassion, and connection that touched our hearts and souls. Upon entering the sanctuary, we were immediately struck by the serene beauty of the natural surroundings—a vast expanse of wilderness teeming with life and vitality. It was not just the breathtaking landscapes that captured our attention; it was the sight of animals being treated with love and respect that truly left a lasting impression on us. But perhaps the most unforgettable moment of all came when we had the privilege of witnessing the feeding of milk to the baby elephants. With tender care and unwavering dedication, the sanctuary staff nurtured these precious young souls, providing them with the nourishment and love they needed to thrive.



At the Udawalawe Wildlife sanctuary

As our journey through the heart of Sri Lanka drew to a close, next we had to bid farewell to our cherished foreign delegates. We are filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the unforgettable memories we have shared and the bonds of friendship that have been forged. For our foreign delegates, this journey was a revelation—a chance to witness firsthand the warmth and hospitality of the Sri Lankan people and the unparalleled beauty of our nation's landscapes. And for us, it was a privilege to share our home with them, to open our hearts and minds to new perspectives and experiences, and to create moments that will be cherished for a lifetime. We are forever grateful to Prof. Mangala Gunatilake (Founder President and President 2023/2024 of SLALAS) for taking over the reigns and providing us with an unforgettable journey of a lifetime.

Zebrafish Husbandry Association



ZHA is a non-profit organisation devoted to promoting and developing zebrafish husbandry standards through:



Collaborative
Community



Expert
Troubleshooting



Increased
Visibility

Become a member and get connected to a professional organisation that elevates zebrafish husbandry to new heights!



Member Benefits



Husbandry
info



Webinar
series



Surveys



Newsletter



Working
Groups

Get in contact with us on our socials



zhaonline.org



@ZHAonline



@zebrafishhusbandry



zebrafishhusbandryassociation



~Acknowledgments~

A massive thank you to everyone who played a vital role in the successful completion of this newsletter:

Contributors for their articles and
The Executive Committee for their support and expert advice