

Prof Kodagoda and Medical Science

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Deshamanya Professor Nandadasa Kodagoda, MBBS, MD, FRCP, DMJ, FCCP, F.Acad. Sc., D.Sc. was a popular and eminent scientist, an academecian and a physician. His contribution to the medical sciences has exceeded a span of four decades.

Qualifying as a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery in 1956, he served the Department of Health Services for a brief period. Then he joined the University as a Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He was trained in the subject for three years, and continued to maintain that was his "first love". Fortuitous circumstances made him change disciplines, and in 1960, he joined the department of Forensic Medicine as a lecturer.

His further training was in the University of Edinburgh, where in 1964 he obtained the Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence, and the Membership of the Royal College of Physicians. On his return home, in 1965, he obtained the Doctorate in Medicine from the University of Ceylon. In 1973, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh conferred its Fellowship on him. The Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka admitted him as a fellow in 1985, and the Ceylon college of Physicians in 1985.

Professor kodagoda's long career in the

University is quite remarkable. In it, he held almost every conceivable post within the reach of an academic and made an immense contribution to medical education. He was the head of the Language Unit that was established in the Medical Faculty when medicine had to be taught and learnt in the Swabhasha. The posts of proctor, counsellor, and warden brought him into close contact with the students. Within his administrative ambit came the Directorships of the Institute of Workers Education and the Institute of Indigenous Medicine.

From time to time, Professor Kodagoda has been appointed to various Boards and Councils of Management at National Level. These included the Boards of the National Institute of Education, and that of the NARESA. Prominent among these positions is the Chairmanship of the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.

Professor Kodagoda's scientific and medical publications cover a wide range of subject areas. He was the first in Sri Lanka to describe the effects of paddy husk on the lungs of rat. The first clinico-pathological description of interstitial pneumonitis also came out of his work. Perhaps the most outstanding of his original work was the formulation of the "Camp Method" for the treatment of drug dependent persons.

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Earlier in his career, Professor Kodagoda was instrumental in the compilation of Sinhala technical terms for medical and allied subjects. He went further in that direction by publishing translations of medical text books, the earliest being in histology. He then translated the well known text book in Forensic Medicine written by Prof. Sydney Smith, Professor of Forensic Medicine, University of Edinburgh.

His contributions to books are numerous, outstanding out of which is his chapter on Abortion in Sri Lanka, in Sachdev's authoritative World Book on Abortion.

International recognition of Professor Kodagoda's contribution to medicine and science has been no less. He served three consecutive terms as a member of the Expert Panel on Drug Abuse of the World Health Organisation. The occasions when he was called upon to function as a consultant to the various agencies of the United Nations have been numerous. The International Council of Sex Education elected him its fellow. The International Organisation of Good templars honoured him twice, first for his work in the area of drug control, and again for services rendered to youth in this region of the world. Outstanding is his receipt of the Lakshmi N. Menon International Award for his contribution towards drug control.

Another branch of medicine Prof. Kodagoda made a contribution was toxicology, the science of poisons. He realised the need for specialized treatment units for poisoning and

a poison information service in early seventies. He developed a card index system for common poisons which had information on treatment.

Prof. Kodagoda has been a General Secretary and the President of the Section A (Medical) of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, a Council member of the Ceylon College of Physicians, an Honorary Secretary of the Medico-Legal Society of Sri Lanka, the Chairman of the Committee for the Popularisation of Science, and a member of the Board of Management of the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine. Prof. Kodagoda made a great contribution in all these associations and institutions to improve quality of medical education which made an impact on the standard quality medicine practised in Sri Lanka.

Considering the contributions Prof. Kodagoda made to different branches of medical sciences it is a tragic loss that he left us so early. He spent his entire academic life to the advancement of medical science in his numerous activities. His vision, discipline and achievements in his professional career was worthy of emulation by all young physicians.

