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## Research - Some contemplative thoughts

Reflecting as a medical professional, one realises towards the end of one's life, that we have spent cocooned, five decades of our allotted four score and ten, in medical care. We routinely and unquestioningly accept this inevitability. Knowledge, skills development, the ensuing responsibility of patient care, leaves, for many of us but a few years before the frailties of senescence creep in, to live life the way we might have liked to.

Patient care no doubt gives us great satisfaction. Only a few are afforded such opportunity to heal one's fellow beings. It is of the highest blessing. Some of us have had an opportunity to teach and this adds to that feeling, in one's dotage.

Notwithstanding, we should try to improve on the five active decades of work, by going the extra mile if possible. Leaving one's 'life arena' at the end, would be further enhanced by being instrumental in helping to develop institutions, in order to provide a better fabric for those to come in the future to work in, compared to what fabric you walked into once upon a time.

In this aspect, global or at least a national contribution would be in order. Thinking in the medical sphere of activity, development of specialties, building institutions, and research on disorders that we see in clinical practice, readily come to mind. Let me expand on the latter, i.e., research in the Sri Lankan context.

Many years ago, while conversing with Prof. Senaka Bibile, he lamented to me, "We need to study our disorders, and work out optimum management to the same; and teach our students from this body of information modulated by what we have learnt from western medical texts."

Have we, now almost fifty years on, gone at least some way to fulfill this reasonable wish? Whilst doing our utmost in



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Mr. Sampath Navaratne

patient care and teaching, how many of our clinicians keep audits of our patients, collect and collate the data, now made so easy with the current computerized facilities? It's with such data that one can perceive the truth or the absence of it, on a hunch you may have. The diseases, you would agree, keep changing as our environment changes. Where our records? Where are our texts, for even students, with an emphasis of our disorders? Have we even a glimmer of a Sri Lankan medical ethos?

Documentation of events in the history of our medical institutions too are very brief. We cannot leave it to historians; imagine if Reverend Mahanama did not script the Mahavamsa! A Sri Lankan ethos at least in the medical field, must need a service beyond the call of your daily duty. Burn the midnight oil however tired you are, it's a calling that we need to heed.

Looking back on the bibliography of medical publications in Sri Lanka, taking into account the doctor patient ratio's that exist now, the physicians and surgeons of yore have made a relatively larger contribution to the texts of the medical fabric. No doubt there is a greater demand for allopathic medicine now, hence less time, but the reality of this shortcoming yet rings true.

When research is done and the manuscript is ready, and one savors the moment of achievement, there is yet, in my opinion, a desire to send it to an indexed foreign journal. If one cogitates who would benefit from the information about studies in this country, it would be obvious where such research should be best published. Yet the current ethos creates the concept of greater kudos in a foreign publication - a thought that is difficult to dislodge. Although you may disagree with me, I strongly believe that we must contribute to the development of our local journals, so that they will one day be eligible for indexing. It's not us that needs to be aggrandized, but the country and it's medical fabric; it is the higher calling.

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