To the Editors:

A message to our profession

Given below is a copy of a letter written by a school-girl from St. Rita's College, Thaldeka Wennappuwa, titled "A letter to Hippocrates" published in the *Daily News* of 5 September 2002. I think it conveys the message to our profession very loud and clear. I wish that the professionals at least listen to our children. Being in the children's page many of our members may not have read it. I was just wondering whether you could find a little space in our journal (*Ceylon Medical Journal*) in the hope that it will reach our membership.

A letter to Hippocrates

Dear Hippocrates,

We had a lesson on your theory and your oath. We learnt how people of your time believed that illnesses were caused by the anger of the gods and evil spirits. Today we live in a highly advanced society in which modern medicine has done marvels. Yet people in the present day would still believe that evil spirits make people sick.

You impressed upon the minds of your students that a patient should be carefully and thoroughly examined in order to diagnose the illness. You laid down very important rules to guide your student's moral conduct.

It is high time we questioned whether your present students follow your guidance. Let me be frank with you. Most doctors today do not spend even a few minutes on a patient. At times they do not allow the patients to explain their illness or difficulties, they start writing the prescription. Most of the doctors think that tablets, capsules and syrups bring complete recovery. Why don't they think that friendliness and friendly conversation with the physician too help patients to recover from their illnesses.

Doctors are a fine production of free education. Government spends a lot of money to produce a doctor. But how many of them are willing to work at hospitals in remote places? How many of them go abroad in search of a better salary? If you come back to the world you can see how keen doctors and the staff of the hospitals are on their rights rather than their duties.

Even though you are the father of modern medicine, doctors do not have the time to listen to you because they are very busy with their private patients.

Yours truly,

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Wennappuwa.

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