

Successful surgical research

Editors: Kemal I Deen and Ruvin R Kumar

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Research is an essential component of postgraduate medical training in the developed world. A good research record is important to become a consultant. Several Boards of the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine in Sri Lanka have recently identified research as a priority in postgraduate training. Not only postgraduate trainees, but also all medical personnel should have some understanding of the ways in which research studies are designed and conducted, as all of them use the results of research in their daily practice. Unfortunately, knowledge and interest in research is inadequate among the medical fraternity in Sri Lanka. One important reason for this is the lack of access to reader friendly texts on research written by authors from the developing world. The authors of this book have worked towards filling this void.

The book is a multi-author volume edited by two reputed researchers. They have assembled a group of contributors from the USA, UK, India and Sri Lanka. This collaboration between the developed and the developing world should be commended and encouraged.

The book is in a compact A5 format with 14 chapters covering almost all aspects of research. The text is well supported by key references from more recent journal articles as well as from classical texts which have stood the test of time. I hope medical libraries would take note of these referenced texts and make them available to potential researchers. Any book of this size is clearly not meant to be a comprehensive text. Although the chapter on statistics is well written, it lacks sufficient examples which would make the various statistical tests comprehensible to the novice. The next edition should add another chapter on statistical tests that have been mentioned but not described in detail in this edition.

Despite the number of authors, the book succeeds in being an easily readable and balanced volume, giving a practical overview of the subject. This makes it useful not only to the beginner but also the experienced researcher. The contents of the book are highly relevant to non-surgical as well as surgical researchers.

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Sri Lanka then and now: a memoir depicting changes in a lifetime

By C G Uragoda

Vishva Lekha, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka, 2008. pp 250. Hard cover. ISBN 978-955-96843-2-9.

Dr Chris G Uragoda is the most prolific, most versatile and most accomplished author of books among Sri Lankan medical doctors of my generation. Notably, they are all about our native land, and range from two bibliographies of medical publications relating to Sri Lanka, the story of wildlife conservation, Sri Lankan traditions and jungle journeys, to the authoritative volume on the history of medicine in Sri Lanka. He is in addition a specialist chest physician, scientific researcher of distinction, and past president of several prestigious learned associations.

The unpretentious object of Uragoda's latest book is concisely described by its title. The book is a scintillating mix of brief autobiographical notes, recollections, reminiscences, memorable anecdotes, local flora and fauna, and many interesting places and people. Events and scenes and other delicious tidbits follow one another in quick succession, but the style is characteristically

Uragoda – like the gentle meandering flow of chaste jungle streams that he describes so well.

Have you ever heard of the *Kidaran* plant, with the intriguingly erotic scientific name of *Amorphophallus paeorifolius*, which exudes a disgusting faecal odour, and is pollinated (of course) by bluebottles attracted by the smell? All right then, you have perhaps heard of "ball bottles"? No? How about the drug named oil of chenopodium, or *ri-hakuru*, or rat-snake bite, or *Veddangevadiya*? These are just a few items that I selected at random to mention here, that are described by Uragoda in his book. You will enjoy reading it, particularly if you are partial to an occasional nostalgic reverie into the "good old days" and far-off things. Some friends tell me that the book is best savoured with a serving of freshly roasted salted cashewnuts and cold beer on a languorous Sunday morning.

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