

Editors

Manu Wimalachandra
Ruwanthi Seneviratne
Dakshitha Wickramasinghe

Editorial Committee

Dinesha Jayasinghe
Chamara Berugodaarachchi
Shamalka Dahanayake
Sahan Guruge
Praveen Weerathunge
Mahen Boralessa
Sachie Fernando
Chiranthi Liyanage
Manujaya Godakandage
Dinusha Sirisena
Nilanka Munasinghe
Jeewaka Malawala

Advisory Board

Professor Lalitha Mendis
Dr. G.R. Constantine
Dr. Indika Karunathilake
Dr. Ashwini de Abrew

Cover page design

Ashan Pathirana
Chamara Berugodaarachchi

Is the grass always greener on the other side?

The ‘brain drain’ is not just a hot topic in the local medical circles, but as evidenced by the increasing number of articles that appear in the international journals, it is very much a global one. It has been a little over a year since the 2001 batch sat for their final exam and already the number of students that have opted for a career overseas, has surpassed double digits. This brings us to the very pertinent question, why do so many local doctors choose this avenue? Of course this is nothing new, ever since independence there has been a steady flow of Sri Lankan doctors out of the country. But now the credit crunch is hitting the more affluent countries a great deal more than it affects the developing world, and good job opportunities are few and far between. The picture becomes murkier still, with many of these ‘immigrants’ expected to serve in less attractive areas, dealing with large patient lists and relatively deprived populations. Many have to start life all over again sans the support of friends and family.

Is the situation so bad in the country, that they are willing to undergo all these hardships elsewhere? Is it the garbage that decorates our streets, or is it the incorrigible drivers who sit on their horns that makes this place so uninhabitable? Low pay, poor lodgings, lack of equipment and long working hours are issues that do not make the national health system very attractive. In the light of these problems it is very easy to forget what we will be leaving here.

One may argue of certain benefits the nation may reap from this transfer, but return of remittances of hard currency is small, especially a decision is made for permanent departure. If doctors don’t return, any knowledge or skills obtained whilst overseas becomes obsolete to us.

Therefore, while the Sri Lankan health system may not be the ideal place for a doctor to be in, going overseas might not be a panacea either. A more productive thing would be for all of us to do our little part to make it a better place. Easier said than done, of course, but like the old saying goes, “it is always difficult to do the right thing”.

So coming back to our question, is the grass *really* greener on the other side? Or are we just running along with the stampede?

*Manu Wimalachandra
Ruwanthi Seneviratne
Dakshitha Wickramasinghe*