The Medical Education Development and Research Centre (MEDARC) of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, has come a long way from its inception in 1993. When MEDARC was established in 1993, it was entrusted with the responsibility of supporting the curriculum change in the Faculty. Since then, MEDARC has contributed to the Faculty development through staff development and providing expertise in Medical Education. MEDARC has also supported other Faculties of Medicine in the country and the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine through its expertise in Medical Education. MEDARC has spread its reach from local, regional to international institutes of health, Medicine and Medical Education as its services ranged from individual to global level.

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There were several activities conducted by MEDARC during this year, including contributing to curriculum revision of the faculty, collaboration and cooperation with national and international organizations.

MEDARC plays a major role in the ongoing curriculum revision process of the faculty. We have established strong collaborations with international organizations including World Health Organization (WHO), Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) and South East Asian Regional Association for Medical Education (SEARAME). MEDARC participates in regional activities of SEARAME, and contributes to the development and expansion of the SEAJME (South East Asian Journal of Medical Education) which is the official journal of SEARAME. The successfully concluded 3rd SEARAME and 2nd FOSME (Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists) Conference held in November 2014, in Colombo was organized by the MEDARC which has contributed towards the international recognition of the Faculty of Medicine and University of Colombo.

The FOSME or the Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists is an organization dedicated to improving the quality of medical education and health professions education in Sri Lanka. MEDARC is working in close collaboration with FOSME in several activities including academic sessions and workshops.

Based on the strength of these activities MEDARC is working towards expanding its role as a University Department of Medical Education and a WHO collaborative Centre. They will be major steps towards achieving our mission of becoming a national, regional and international Centre of excellence in Medical education.

Dr. Indika Karunathilake

Editor
ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR PROBATIONARY LECTURERS

One day orientation programme for academic staff members who had recently joined the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo took place on 19th January 2015 at the Faculty Board Room. The programme consisted of a series of panel discussions and Q & A sessions focused on following objectives;

- Recognize the curriculum, its support structures and own role and responsibilities
- Familiarize with the administrative and financial procedures in the University as well as the facilities available for academic staff
- Discuss challenges in personal and professional life as a young academic
- Identify opportunities for research and career development

Among the resource persons were Prof. Lalitha Mendis, Former Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo and Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, Former Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya.

HOW TO MAKE LECTURES INTERACTIVE

A workshop on “How to make lectures interactive” was held on 19th of February 2015 at the Faculty Board Room. As resource persons, Dr. Indika Karunathilake, Dr. Gominda Ponnampерuma, Dr. Asela Olupeliyawa and Dr. Ashwini de Abrew provided the academic staff members present at the workshop with an interactive and lively session on various methods of improving interactivity and active learning during large group teaching.
RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING IN MEDICAL EDUCATION

A workshop on Research and Publishing in Medical Education conducted by Dr. Indika Karunathilake, Dr. Gominda Ponnamperuma, Dr. Asela Olupeliyawa and Dr. Ashwini de Abrew was held on 7th April 2015 at the Board Room, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo. The main topics of discussion included application of basic principles of research to medical education, identification of qualitative and quantitative research methods applicable to medical education and opportunities available for publishing in medical education research. The participants obtained a broad view on research and publishing on medical education at the end of the workshop.

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING AN OSCE

A workshop on planning and conducting an OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) was held on 15th July 2015 at the Faculty Board Room. The Faculty staff members presented at the workshop took part in a very interactive session on how to plan and conduct an OSCE. Participants received hands on experience on planning and conducting an OSCE via the small group activities done at the workshop. Dr. Indika Karunathilake, Dr. Gominda Ponnamperuma and Dr. Ashwini de Abrew served as the resource persons for the workshop.
SGD AND PBL FACILITATION

A very interactive and enjoyable session on SGD (Small Group Discussion) and PBL (Problem Based Learning) facilitation was conducted on 13th August 2015 for the probationary lecturers of the faculty. The resource persons were Professor Joachim Perera, Dr. Indika Karunathilake and Dr. Gominda Ponnamperuma. Practical and effective approaches to SGD/PBL facilitation were discussed during the session.

ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR A/L 2013 BATCH

The orientation programme for the new entrants of the batch of A/L 2013, organized by the MEDARC took place at 5th and 6th January, 2015.

Medical students were given support and guidance to become familiar with the student centered faculty curriculum and develop self-directed study skills through this orientation course for new entrants. Students were briefed regarding the history of the Faculty by Professor Lalitha Mendis and were introduced to the curriculum and essential learning skills. The importance of right attitudes was highlighted through lectures and small group activities. On the second day, they were introduced to the concept of small group learning and actively participated in a discussion on a general topic, facilitated by MEDARC and other academic staff.

The Faculty handbook for 2015 developed by the MEDARC in collaboration with the Curriculum Implementation Unit was made available for the new entrants. This handbook contains valuable information regarding the history of this Faculty, its layout, the course leading to the MBBS and B.Sc. Physiotherapy degrees, available services, student assistance schemes, disciplinary matters, rules regarding medical certificates, special leave etc.
Feedback from graduands who had recently completed final MBBS
Feedback from the 2008 A/L batch was obtained by MEDARC in collaboration with the Deans’ office aiming at evaluating the current medical curriculum at the Faculty, as perceived by its recent graduands. Their views will be utilized for quality assurance and curriculum revision to improve the standard of medical education. Results were presented at the Faculty Board meeting as well as at the Faculty Curriculum Retreat.

Lecturers’ feedback on the curriculum of Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
Lecturers’ perceptions regarding the ongoing curriculum was obtained via a questionnaire distributed electronically and at the board meetings. The responses were qualitatively analyzed by MEDARC and several dominant themes were identified. The analysis report was submitted to the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Committee (CD & EC), in depth discussions took place along with suggestions from the committee to finalize the documented concerns identified regarding the current curriculum. A faculty curriculum retreat was planned by the CD&EC to further discuss the concerns and identify strategies to address them.

Faculty Curriculum Retreat
The Faculty Curriculum Retreat was held on 20th to 21st of June as a residential programme at Bentota with the participation of the academic staff of the Faculty. Over 40 academic staff members representing all departments participated. At the Retreat the concerns were further discussed and modified and recommendations was developed. MEDARC played a key role at the Retreat with the provision of the necessary data required for the discussions. Some of the recommendations brought forward at the Retreat include;
- Spiral organization of the curriculum where content is revisited in Basic Sciences, Applied Sciences and Clinical Sciences
- Increase the use of PBLs and the emphasis on pathophysiology in the modules
- Clinical sciences to have log books, guidelines and formal assessments
At the CD & EC meeting held after the Retreat it was decided to implement the recommendations to which there was consensus (e.g-spiral curriculum) through short and medium term action plans while the other areas could be further discussed until consensus is reached.
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

This year MEDARC has completed several research. They are;

- Barriers in Implementation of a Multi-sectorial Nutrition Promotion Programme in Rural Sri Lanka
- Perception about self-directed learning among undergraduates of Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Different roles in an Integrated Nutrition Promotion and Rural Development Programme
- End of course views of students on the MBBS curriculum of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo
- Medical and Physiotherapy Undergraduates’ perception on the importance of roles of a medical teacher
- Tracer study of early career graduates of a selected cohort of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Perception on Learning Management System among the Medical Undergraduates in Faculty of Medicine, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Outcome based approach in developing a multi-disciplinary integrated curriculum for nutrition promotion and rural development in Sri Lanka
- Proposed outcome based model for curriculum revision: Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Developing an Electronic Curriculum Map for Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

These studies have been presented in several national and international conferences. Another research, “Electronic Books versus Printed Books: Impact on Final Year Medical Learning” is currently being carried out by MEDARC and it’s in data collection stage.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The Staff Development Programme on Health Profession Education for the Nursing tutors will be conducted by MEDARC in collaboration with FOSME from September 2015. The target population will be tutors in all the training schools, who are responsible for conducting the basic training programmes for health professionals. The main resource persons for these workshops will be the MEDARC academic staff.
ONLINE DIPLOMA IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The online diploma course in Disaster Management which is conducted by the MEDARC, aims to deliver advanced training on the management of the public health implications of disasters. Healthcare workers in both public and private sectors including primary and emergency care physicians, public health personnel, nurses, pre-hospital care providers and first responders are the target group. The 3rd batch has successfully completed the Online Diploma in Disaster Management. Certificates will be issued at an awards ceremony to be held later in 2015.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

E-learning has become one of the mainstream trends in medical education. Most of academic institutions deliver E-learning programmes through a web-based Learning Management System (LMS). LMS can be used to assemble and deliver learning content rapidly with in a centralized and controlled administration.

Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo maintains a MOODLE based LMS which contains Interactive learning lessons, case scenarios of virtual patients, multiple choice questions and other learning material uploaded by some streams and modules. Lecture materials are uploaded mostly using articulate software to enhance self paced interactive learning. Additional reading material such as case reports and original research articles has been included to generate student interest. The content is organized according to the curriculum structure which consists of five academic streams, i.e. Basic Sciences Stream, Applied Sciences Stream, Community Stream, Behavioral Sciences Stream and Clinical Sciences Stream.

Access to the relevant components of the LMS has been given to all students while they are constantly encouraged by the lecturers to use the uploaded learning material. In addition, several workshops on learning material development and LMS management were conducted by MEDARC resource persons for both academic and non-academic staff.
Currently MEDARC is working in close collaboration with the academic staff to develop relevant and new learning material to enhance students learning experience with LMS.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM MAP

A curriculum is a mixture of educational approaches, course content, learning outcomes, assessments and the individual student’s learning styles. The main characteristic of an effective integrated curriculum is teachers exchanging information about what is being taught, assessed and whether learning outcomes are achieved. This exchange of information can be accomplished through curriculum mapping, which is a tool for implementation, management and development of a curriculum.
A curriculum map is a “diagrammatic representation of what is taught (learning objectives and course content), how it is taught (teaching methods and learning opportunities), when it is taught (timetabling and sequencing), and what is learned (learning outcomes and student assessment)”. It is a procedure for reviewing the curriculum in use and it helps to identify where learning outcomes are addressed within the curriculum. This helps both staff and students by displaying key elements of the curriculum, and the relationships between them. Staff can be clear about their role in the big picture. The scope and sequence of student learning is made clear and links with assessments are clarified, hence curriculum planning becomes more effective. Also in this way the curriculum is made transparent to all the stakeholders including the teachers, the students, the curriculum developers, the public and the researchers.

A curriculum map can be paper based or electronic. Electronic curriculum mapping offers the following advantages: mapping is ongoing, easy data entry and updating, generation of tables for analysis, promotion of ongoing review and assistance in decision making. MEDARC has developed an electronic curriculum map for the MBBS undergraduate programme. The curriculum map is available at MEDARC, and will be made available online for better access in the near future.
Collaboration with FOSME

The Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists (FOSME) was established in 2007 with the goal of improving quality of medical education and health professions education in Sri Lanka by joining individuals and organizations responsible for medical and healthcare education. The FOSME Secretariat is currently at MEDARC.

FOSME Outstation Academic sessions

The FOSME Academic sessions are organized with the objective of bringing the medical educationists from around the country together to share their experiences and expertise. The first FOSME Outstation Academic session was held at the Faculty of Healthcare Sciences (FHCS), Eastern University, Batticaloa on 9-10th August 2015. The sessions were attended by several FOSME council members including Dr. Indika Karunathilake and Dr. Gominda Ponnamperuma, Academic staff of the FHCS and the Extended Faculty Consultants of Teaching Hospital Batticaloa. The session had very active participation and was carried out successfully. The next FOSME outstation academic session will be held at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Staff Development Workshops carried out in Collaboration with MEDARC

- A workshop on “Work Place Based Assessment” was held on 19th March 2015 and was conducted by Dr. John J. Norcini, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) former Director of Psychometrics and former Executive Vice President for Evaluation and Research of the American Board of Internal Medicine. Academic staff members from Colombo, Kelaniya, Peradeniya and Sri Jayawardenapura medical faculties attended.

- A workshop on “Peer assisted Learning” jointly organized by Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) and FOSME was conducted by Dr. Diantha Soemantri MD, MMedEd, Lecturer in Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia, Dr. Kosala Marambe, a senior lecturer in Medical education, University of Peradeniya and Professor Joachim Perera, the Deputy Director, Centre for Medical Education, International Medical University, Malaysia. The workshop was held on 9th July 2015 and MEDARC played an active role in conducting the workshop.
South East Asian Journal of Medical Education (SEAJME), the official journal of South East Asian Association for Medical Education (SEARAME) is an International peer-reviewed journal that follows standard editorial practices and has a multi-country Editorial Board of eminent Medical Educationists. The Editorial Office is located at MEDARC, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Dr. Indika Karunathilake is the Editor in chief of SEAJME Journal and MEDARC staff contributes to the editorial process. The journal welcomes articles addressing areas in medical education such as curriculum design, teaching methods, student assessment, programme evaluation, etc. SEAJME contributes to enhance the quality of Medical Education by promoting the highest Standards in Medical Education among the member countries of the South-East Asia Region.

Establishing MEDARC as a WHO Collaborating Centre

MEDARC has a long history of working in collaboration with the WHO. Since 1998, MEDARC has continuously conducted collaborative activities (e.g. APWs) in curriculum development, evaluation and Faculty development. In addition the academics at MEDARC have participated as technical experts for regional and WHO activities since 2005. In this light consultants and national professional officers in health systems from WHO Sri Lanka office has proposed the establishment of MEDARC as a WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC). MEDARC staff under the guidance of Dr. Indika Karunathilake and Dr. Asela Olupeliyawa has been working to establish MEDARC as a WHO collaboration Centre, the applying process has already been completed and MEDARC is waiting favorable response from WHO regional office.

Designating MEDARC as a WHO Collaborating Centre would promote more extensive collaborations in the future. It would also improve the capacity of MEDARC for institutional, national, and regional contributions.
The 12th Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference (APMEC) took place at the National University of Singapore from 4th to 8th February 2015. Several oral presentations and posters were presented by a number of Sri Lankan delegates from different institutions and faculties in the island.

Dr. Indika Karunathilake and Dr. Gominda Ponnampereuma conducted a workshop on Using Qualitative Research in the Evaluation of Educational Programmes. This workshop was well attended and received an agreeable response from the participants. Dr. I. Karunathilake also conducted a session on “Developing Programs with Limited Resources and How to Publish from an Editor’s Perspective: Tips for a Young Writer”.

Dr. Gominda Ponnampereuma and Dr. Asela Olupeliyawa collectively conducted a workshop on the “Art and Science of Developing Rating Scales in Health Professions’ Education Research and Assessment Tools”. As a co-facilitator Dr. Asela Olupeliyawa, also contributed in a workshop on “Learning Teamwork in the Clinical Setting: Developing EPAs, Milestones and Assessment”.

Three abstracts from studies conducted by MEDARC were also presented at this conference.

Participants of the 12th Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference (APMEC)
Visitors to MEDARC

Dr. Tong Chol Pak

Dr. Tong Chol Pak, Regional Adviser, Human Resources for Health and Fellowships (HRH), World Health Organization, South-East Asia Regional Office visited MEDARC in March 2015. The establishment of MEDARC as a WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) was also mooted during site visits to MEDARC by Dr. Pak with Dr. Thushara Ranasinghe National Professional Officer, WHO.

Dr. John Norcini

Dr. John Norcini is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) and the former Director of Psychometrics and former Executive Vice President for Evaluation and Research of the American Board of Internal Medicine. He has lectured and taught in dozens of countries, and has published extensively.

Dr. Norcini visited the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo on 26th March 2015 as the resource person for the Discussion on “Workplace Based Assessment” jointly organized by FOSME and MEDARC.
Dr. Diantha Soemantri

MEDARC was happy to welcome Dr. Diantha Soemantri MD, MMedEd, Lecturer in Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia, who visited the Faculty as a resource person for a SLMA Post conference workshop jointly organized by FOSME. She visited the MEDARC on the same day and adopted a very positive attitude towards MEDARC’s efforts in improving Medical and healthcare education in Sri Lanka and discussed possible future collaborations with MEDARC.