

Picture story

Health messages on postage stamps

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Medical philately covers a wide area ranging from the history of medicine to recent advances (1), and its bibliography records several thousand articles (2). Many countries have used postage stamps for the promotion of campaigns and fund raising programs on matters related to health and medicine (3). Figure shows stamps issued in Sri Lanka depicting messages on child health.

Public education through postage stamps crosses barriers of both distance and language. Despite the widespread use of electronic media the effectiveness of postage stamps in communicating health messages is likely to remain, because stamps are able to reach every stratum of society. Further, stamps are retained in stamp collections, continuing to draw enthusiasm as a hobby, from school level onwards. Although Sri Lanka issues more than twenty-five new postage stamps each year, they have not been used adequately as a health education tool.

This method of disseminating health messages deserves the attention and interest of all doctors if we are to see more Sri Lankan stamps embodying medical themes.

References

1. Senanayake MP. Paediatric philately. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 1997; **76**: 287-8.
2. Pearn J. Medical philately of Australia: further observations. *Medical Journal of Australia* 1978; **2**: 257-64.

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3. Kamper-Jorgensen. Postage stamps with WHO messages. *World Health Forum* 1992; **13**: 20-2.



Figure

Top left to right: Oral rehydration therapy, growth monitoring, immunisation.

Bottom left to right: UNICEF, breast feeding, nutrition.