

Presidential address: Annual Academic Sessions of College of Pathologists of Sri Lanka 2015

Using pathology reports as a data source for strengthening cancer surveillance

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Chief guest Professor Mohan de Silva and Dr Mrs Dhammika de Silva, guest of honour Professor and Mrs Neil A Shepherd, special resource persons from the UK, Professors Adrienne M Flanagan and Marco Novelli and Dr Roberto Tirabosco, past presidents and members of the Council of the College of Pathologists of Sri Lanka, presidents and secretaries of other colleges and associations, special invitees, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to start off by saying that I am very cognisant of the responsibility that you have placed upon me. It is one I do not take lightly and I will strive to continue the good work that has gone on before me.

As the College celebrates its fortieth year, I would like, if I may, to take a moment to look back, as I understand, this is indeed necessary if we are to step into the future meaningfully.

“The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward.”

Winston S. Churchill, 1944, Address to the Royal College of Physicians.

The College of Pathologists of Sri Lanka was formed in 1975, by a small group of pathologists with a big vision, who understood the importance of having an organized body to represent them. With the establishment of the Board of Study in Pathology of the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM) in 1980, a training course providing a much-needed diagnostic service in pathology to the entire country commenced. Once this training was established, there were

other aspects of pathology to identify and improve and the College we have today, forty years later, is a reflection of the aspirations and hard work of many presidents, councils and college members. Over the years, the Board of Study in Pathology of the PGIM continues to refine the pathology curriculum and its assessments and strives to maintain and nurture core values of pathology in the wake of changing trends in medical education worldwide.

The College has had many functions over the years. Projects in the health sector have enabled the development of key peripheral laboratories, funded training programmes for Medical Laboratory Technicians (MLT's) and funded the revision of national guidelines for reporting of biopsies. Other key goals include expansion of the National Cervical Cancer Screening Programme started two decades ago, the developing of key national immunohistochemistry laboratories islandwide and the planning of a reference centre for molecular biology.

The pathology report documents our findings when we view cancer through a microscopic lens. As pathologists, we identify and type cancer and comment on its spread and prognosis. The report is used as the basic tool for diagnosis, treatment and prognostication. This report however, can be used for another purpose. If cancer data from pathology reports islandwide are collated and analysed collectively, it can be used as a highly effective tool in improving the accuracy