

**COMMENTARY & NOTES****DR. FELIX PRASHANTHA AMERASINGHE (1948-2005)****A SRI LANKAN WITH A TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH**

Dr. Felix P. Amerasinghe came from a classical background in medical entomology and became a



world class researcher in the field of taxonomy and ecology of disease carrying insects. He obtained his B.Sc. from

University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and Ph.D. from University of Bristol, UK, both in zoology. One of Felix's major contributions was the development of keys for the identification of mosquitoes of importance for the South Asian region. Without this contribution many research projects or disease surveillance systems would not have been possible and these keys will continue to be of tremendous benefit in the years to come.

Felix was dedicated to field work and has, along with his wife and co-researcher, Dr. Priyanie H. Amerasinghe, made Sri Lanka famous for long-term extensive studies on the impact of irrigation development, especially on malaria; improved the understanding of the transmission dynamics of malaria and Japanese encephalitis; and established a baseline of viruses isolated from mosquitoes in Sri Lanka. During Felix's tenure at the University of Maryland, he collaborated with hunters in the collection of ticks and by applying geographical information systems, he contributed extensively to the mapping of Lyme disease through the use of novel monitoring approaches.

From his classical background in entomology, Felix, over the years, increasingly developed an interest and contributed to the wider discussion of disease control strategies and the linkages between biodiversity conservation and disease ecology. This interest was strengthened through his collaboration with and later as a Research Leader at the International Water

Management Institute (IWMI). In early 1994 Felix and Priyanie became members of a multidisciplinary team working on a joint IWMI-University of Peradeniya project studying the socio-economic impacts of malaria, piloting control interventions and contributing to basic sciences in malaria parasitology and molecular biology. This project alone has resulted in over 20 international scientific articles. As an IWMI Researcher, Felix supervised the implementation of several projects on issues as diverse as health impacts of wastewater use in agriculture, malaria vector ecology, disease control, integrated pest management and biodiversity studies in Asia and Africa

From his base at the University of Peradeniya as a Lecturer and Professor of Applied Zoology and later at IWMI, Felix developed an extensive international network and contributed to international efforts in the development of disease control strategies, including as a member of the WHO/UNEP/FAO Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control. Additionally, Felix's reviews presented in book chapters often form part of the university curricular around the world.

An endless number of students have benefited from Felix's university lectures, presentations at Sri Lankan national scientific meetings and at international conventions. Felix was a brilliant, inspiring and entertaining speaker. His talent as a teacher and his contribution to national scientific organizations have clearly helped the strengthening of Sri Lanka's research capacity and its international standing.

Felix's contribution to research is truly impressive and so was his personality. He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him and by the many enjoying his contribution to science.

**Sarath Abayawardana**

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Dr.F.P.Amerasinghe was a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka since 1999 until 2003. He also served as a referee for the Journal throughout his career. The NSF is indebted to him for his services as a member and later as the Chairman of the Working Committee on Biological Sciences. As an eminent scientist, Dr.Amerasinghe 's contribution to the NSF in many other ways is much valued.

Outstanding contributions to the Journal by Dr.Amerasinghe include:

- I. Illustrated keys to the genera of mosquitoes (Diptera:Culicidae)
- II. Keys for the identification of the adults of genus *Culex* (Diptera: Culicidae) in Sri Lanka.

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His untimely demise is a great loss to the scientific community and to the country as a whole. We will always remember him with gratitude.