

## Editorial

# Introducing MRCP Exam in Sri Lanka

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The Ceylon College of Physicians collaborates with the 3 UK Royal Colleges and starts the MRCP UK Exams on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1999 starting with the Part 1 paper in the first instance. It is hoped that there will be a stepwise introduction of the written section of Part 2 and later the Clinicals and Orals allowing local students to do this exam totally in Sri Lanka. This may take a few years to complete.

Historically the MRCP (Part 1) was held with involvement of the Ceylon College of Physicians in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The author had sat for this exam in 1971 in Colombo. The Government curbed its free availability due to shortages of foreign exchange and the fear of brain drain. At one stage only 50 students were allowed to sit and the Ceylon College conducted screening exams. Sri Lankans topped the percentage pass rates (nearly 90%) from all overseas centre that year as they got their best students to sit.

With PGIM taking over General Medical Training from 1-1-1980, the links with the Royal Colleges were maintained via an Agency Paper agreement. The Royal Colleges agreed to sell the Part 1 question paper at a reduced rate to the PGIM (like also to Ireland) provided the Exam was held at dates / times stipulated by the Royal Colleges. They would help with marking and supply papers and raw marks. No one could claim they had sat the MRCP (UK) paper although it was in fact the same paper which the PGIM produced for the local MD Part 1. A local Tropical Medicine question paper of 15 MCQ were added on and later this paper was replaced by a 20 station OSCE

(Objective Structured Clinical Exam). Thus the UK Agency paper only formed part of the MD (Part 1 locally).

The PGIM had the last Agency paper in General Medicine in 1998 and firmly decided that the Board of Study in Medicine does its own local MCQ paper. The local MCQ Core Group is now ready for its first exam in October 99. This would save the country over 2 million rupees annually.

There is however a great consumer demand in Sri Lanka for the British MRCP qualification. Many of our PGIM postgraduates turn their attention to acquiring the MRCP (UK) in addition when in UK rather than concentrate on the training they were sent for.

This fact made the Ceylon College to link up with the Royal Colleges to work towards introducing this exam locally. Our students can then sit and pass this exams if they wish to whilst awaiting job placements abroad. They could then train in UK without the strain of another exam.

The local MD would reign supreme and the only qualification recognised locally in the state sector for jobs, promotions etc whilst the MRCP or any other diplomas acquired here or abroad would be additional merit. For private sector candidates and those seeking foreign placements the MRCP held locally is a great boon and avoids the travel and displacement and the increased expenses to sit in UK.

The Ceylon College of Physicians welcomes this introduction as not only does it serve to strengthen the links between our colleges but in its wake will come exchange of examiners, in-

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roduction of new evaluation techniques and uptodate UK methodology available to our students and teachers. Overall the continuing medical educational strategies of our college will rise up to meet the new demand of local aspirants for courses and mock exams.

The Ceylon College is confident that the introduction of the MRCP (UK) will in no way be a hindrance to the local MD Exams which will continue to remain the PGIMs and Ministry of Health gold standard for acceptance for Board Certification in General Medicine.