



Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

Monash-Sri Lankan Public Health Professional Training Program

School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine



Monash - Sri Lankan Public Health Professional Training Program

The School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (SPHPM) at Monash University, Melbourne, collaborates with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health, in its public health program for Sri Lankan health practitioners.

SPHPM hosts mid-career medical/dental practitioners with a research doctorate, and a passion for research, to provide an insight into Public Health research and practice in Australia. We are looking for those with a strong desire:

- to become a member of a high-level committed research team
- to return to Sri Lanka and take up a position of leadership in the Sri Lankan health service.



What SPHPM at Monash University offers:

- research experience at a world renowned organisation (The Alfred Hospital, Monash Medical Centre or the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine)
- opportunity to publish peer-review publications and conference participation
- arranged visits to Public Health organizations in Melbourne
- selected Short Courses in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine
- participation in selected units in the SPHPM Masters program
- supportive advice and mentoring



“For our School the program is a very practical contribution to health in South East Asia. The opportunity to train the future leaders in public health in Sri Lanka is a great privilege for us.”

Professor John McNeil (left)
Head of SPHPM



The Australian Experience



Dr Supun Wijesinghe.

Sri Lankan doctor Supun Wijesinghe still has four months remaining in his placement year at the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health (MonCOEH), but he already has big plans when he returns to Sri Lanka.

During his time at MonCOEH, Supun has visited the National Heart Foundation, Eastern Health services and Medicare Locals, and says that these opportunities have given him enormous insight into how public health services are provided in developed countries.

Supun is proud of Sri Lanka's exemplary progress in healthcare, particularly in the area of maternal and child health. The Sri Lankan Government is now turning its focus to improving occupational and environmental health, particularly in light of the Sri Lanka's recent rapid urbanisation. This has seen workers moving away from traditional, informal cottage industries to much larger, formal manufacturing sector, in many cases employing in excess

of 1,000 workers at any one plant. His Government is keen to ensure that correct occupational health and safety policy and to implement legislation to protect employees in these growing industries.

"We are still a developing country with rapid industrialisation and investment in industry," he explains. "Because of that, occupational health is becoming more important." Supun hopes that with the knowledge and expertise he has gained during his time with MonCOEH under Malcolm Sim, he will be able to influence change through consultation with Government, Ministry, academia and industry groups and bring these groups together to establish a national occupational and environmental framework. "I don't think I can change things overnight", says Supun, "but by talking to all the relevant groups and industries I believe we can definitely influence change."

Supun is an advocate of good quality research, and wants to utilise

his experience here to train other researchers in Sri Lanka. "I am very impressed with the methods and standards researchers use here, and this is reflected in the quality of their research: I really want to promote and encourage excellence in occupational research in Sri Lanka" he says. "In order to build a strong argument for change, you need to provide good quality research, and I am keen to pursue this area when I return."

Supun has thoroughly enjoyed his time in Australia, and has made the most of his weekends off by exploring Melbourne and Victoria with his wife. "We pack our things in the car and off we go!" he laughs, praising the ease of navigating traffic here in comparison to his native Colombo.

"MonCOEH has been wonderful," Supun enthuses, "I am very grateful to Malcolm (Sim) and Helen (Kelsall) for their guidance and insight, and with the experience gained here, I am excited about being involved in improving occupational and environmental policy back home."

Contact us

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