



## “Presidential Address – SAFOMS-MENOSOC 2021”

### Quality Care for Menopause Under Challenging Circumstances

#### Akmeemana SP<sup>1</sup>

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Good morning to everyone. Prof. Mary Ann Lumsden, the chief guest, Dr. Asela Gunawardane, our guest of honour, Prof. Piyusha Atapattu, the MENOSOC orator, Dr. Jaideep Malhotra President of the South Asian Federation of Menopause Societies (SAFOMS), Dr. Rohana Haththotuwa, President Elect of the SAFOMS 2021, Past Presidents of Menopause Society of Sri Lanka, council members, representatives of Ministry of Health, WHO, UNFPA, FHB, distinguished invitees and ladies and gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure I welcome all of you to the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the South Asian Federation of Menopause Societies together with the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Sessions of the Menopause Society of Sri Lanka.

I am profoundly delighted to welcome, Prof. Mary Ann Lumsden, our chief guest. She is the CEO of FIGO and Past President of the International Menopause Society. She is a long-standing friend of Menopause Society of Sri Lanka. Thank you very much madam for accepting our invitation and gracing us with your presence despite your busy schedule.

Guest of honour, Dr. Asela Gunawardane, Director General of Health Services, thank you Asela for gracing this occasion. Asela and I have been good friends for many years. He is an efficient ad-

ministrator and one of the busiest persons in the country with the COVID-19 pandemic still fogging the air around us. Your presence is highly valued.

I welcome Dr. Jaideep Malhotra, the Outgoing President of the South Asian Federation of Menopause Societies who has delivered many lectures at our scientific sessions, and the husband Dr. Narendra Malhotra.

My sincere congratulations to Dr. Rohana Haththotuwa who will be inducted today as the President of the South Asian Federation of Menopause Societies. I wish him and the new council all the very best. On behalf of everyone, I wish them the courage and strength to continue their future endeavours for the betterment of the women in the region.

I welcome and congratulate Prof. Piyusha Atapattu, the orator today. She is one of the live wires of the Menopause Society of Sri Lanka for many years and will be delivering the MENOSOC oration for the year 2021.

It is with great pleasure I welcome our overseas speakers from India and Bangladesh. Thank you, Dr. Ambuja Choranur, President IMS, Dr. Tripura Sundari, Dr. Neelam Agraval and Professor Zinnat Nassrin for your physical presence during this difficult period.

I am grateful to the overseas speakers who are joining us virtually, Prof. Steven Goldstine, President of the International Menopause Society, Prof. Rubina Hussian, President Pakistan Menopause Society, two speakers from Pakistan, Prof. Kesang Bista, President of the Nepal Menopause Society, two speakers from Nepal, and the two distinguished speakers from India and UK.



I am proud to welcome the Sri Lankan experts who are wholeheartedly contributing as speakers, chairpersons, and judges. Thank you, my teachers, and colleagues, for your support.

I also have the pleasure in welcoming the representatives of other sister colleges, officials of MOH, UNFPA, WHO, FHB, and other distinguish invitees. Your presence is a source of inspiration and great strength to us.

Menopause Society of Sri Lanka was founded in year 2000 with Dr. M.D.P. Gooneratne as the Founder President and Dr. Hemantha Perera as the Secretary. They felt the need to address the issues related to post reproductive life as there was a huge vacuum, and this was not addressed very well. ever since this organisation grew from strength to strength.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our activities were restricted and most of the health care facilities were directed towards controlling the pandemic. We had to postpone the Annual Academic Sessions initially planned for September 2021 and conduct most of our council meetings on on-line platforms.

Menopause is a physiological event in women's life but leading to many health problems. About 70% of women experience some health issues related to menopause. This may affect their quality of life and in turn have an adverse effect on family life. Symptoms like hot flushes, insomnia, irritability, lack of concentration and sexual problems can lead to family disputes.

Osteoporosis is a long-term adverse complication of menopause. The morbidity and mortality associated are alarming and may end up disabling a woman. In turn, it affects the woman and her family as well as imposing a huge burden on the healthcare budget. These areas are not well addressed in our region. To interrupt this chain, creating an awareness among public on menopause

and related health issues and educating them on prevention and treatments available is mandatory.

We carried out regional awareness programmes, educating healthcare workers before the COVID pandemic and later via online webinars. Public health midwives (PHMs) are the main portal in this country who have direct contact with the families at the grass root level.

Keeping that in mind, we published books on menopause for nurses, midwives, and doctors. We also produced educational videos on important areas. These were done during Dr. Mangala Disanayake tenure with the help of WHO. This year we have developed short videos, mainly targeting the users of social media. These are 2 to 3 minutes videos with animations and health messages delivered in a simple manner. The videos will be launched during the inauguration today.

We undertook to prepare short guidelines on management of menopausal problems. These are useful to medical practitioners for quick reference. This activity is sponsored by UNFPA.

Our plan to open midlife clinics in major hospitals this year, has been held back, due to the COVID situation. However, we have prepared a midlife clinic record with funding from UNFPA. We look forward to the assistance of the DGHS in initiating these clinics.

Menopause task force is another major area to concentrate on. We had several discussions with the Ministry of Health regarding this. We hope to obtain the support of Dr. Asela Gunawardane, Director General of Health Services, in recommending this process with relevant stakeholders once the COVID situation becomes favourable.

Sri Lanka Journal of Menopause (SLJOM) is a peer reviewed indexed journal initiated and edited by Dr. Sanath Lanerole and his editorial team. I thank him, Dr. Sharada Jayalath and Dr. Chanil



Ekanayake for the hard work in compiling the journal. We also publish a newsletter three times a year with a leading article.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to all the past presidents and their councils for the work they have done to uplift the health of post reproductive women in the country.

Pre-congress workshop on urogynaecology, conducted by Dr. Aparna Hedge, an eminent urogynaecologist of international fame held on 18<sup>th</sup> was a huge success with over 50 participants. Dr. Mangala Dissanayake single handedly organised this and Zydes Cadila sponsored the event.

This time we have drawn up a very interesting academic programme with overseas and local speakers. The theme for this year academic sessions is “Quality Care for Menopause Under Challenging Circumstances”. I am grateful to all the speakers for their commitment to the Menopause Society of Sri Lanka.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Piyusha, Dr. Mangala, Dr. Sharada, Dr. Champa, Dr. Madura, Dr Janaki, Dr. Shiromali and Dr. Dasanthi for their untiring support in organising this Academic Session under a very difficult circumstances. Dr. M.D.P. Gooneratne and Dr. Hemantha Perera were pillars of strength as always. A big thank to Mrs Buddhini Geekiyanage, our efficient office secretary for her commitment.

I also like to thank all the pharmaceutical companies who contributed to make this event a success. I wish to thank Miss Sepalika and all others at Hotel Taj Samudra for their kind co operation.

So, ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for being here with us. Have a pleasant day. Thank you.