

Award category 1 - Outstanding leadership in introducing technologies

Initiation of education in laboratory animal science and alternatives to animal experiments in Sri Lanka and establishment of Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS)

Journey in the field of laboratory animal science was commenced in September 1994 using rat and rabbit animal models for the postgraduate research protocols. The discipline of laboratory animal science (LAS) is a field considered under biomedical sciences which contributed enormously for the development of medicine from its inception. In developed countries like America and in Europe, it is mandatory to obtain a license to engage in research using animals. Therefore, the First International Certificate Course on LAS in the Asian region in collaboration with the Utrecht University was organized and conducted at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo in the year 2011 which was the beginning of organized training of researchers in the country. This was financially supported by the Laboratory Animals Ltd, UK and International Council for Laboratory Animal Science.

Lack of established ethical guidelines for animal research in the country was a drawback faced by many researchers. Therefore, on the invitation of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo in 2008, initiatives were taken to the development and publication of 'Ethical Guidelines for the use of animals in research in Sri Lanka'. This was published as a document by the Forum of Ethics Review Committees in Sri Lanka in 2009 which was funded by World Health Organization. Following the above activities, Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS) was established in December 2012. On the same day, 'Telemetry' for monitoring of physiological parameters in lab animals was introduced to Sri Lankan researchers with a demonstration by the A D Instruments Ltd of India.

SLALAS conducted workshops on LAS in different universities (Colombo, Sri Jayawardanapura and Uva Wellassa) under the leadership of the award winner as the Founder President in 2013 to continue dissemination of knowledge and skills. Participation as an invited speaker at the 18th Alternatives to animal experiments Conference held in University of Linz, Austria in 2013 enabled her to undergo training on two alternative models (EpiDerm in vitro skin irritation test and Hen egg test for Draize rabbit eye irritation test). This training enabled her to introduce alternatives to animal experiments (zebrafish egg model, IdMOC technology and EpiDerm in vitro skin irritation test) to Sri Lankan scientists at the pre and post conference workshops of the Inaugural Scientific Conference of SLALAS held in January 2014.

Winners of Certificates of Merit

As the first and only certified trainee in the country who underwent a comprehensive training on zebrafish egg model in the University of Antwerp, Belgium in September 2014, it is her aim to establish a zebrafish lab for toxicity and water quality testing in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. Necessary steps have been taken to organize and conduct International Certificate and Diploma courses on laboratory Animal Science in collaboration with the Utrecht University on annual basis commencing from the year 2015.

About the winner



Prof. Mangala Gunatilake

She is a veterinary surgeon by profession, graduated from University of Peradeniya in 1991. She joined the Dept. of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo in 1993 and commenced research using laboratory animals and isolated perfused kidney and kidney slice models in 1994. She obtained her PhD in 2001. She is the Founder of the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science and she led the Association as its First President in 2013.