

## A bibliometric study in natural products chemistry across an institutional landscape in Sri Lanka

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The economy of a non-industrialized country such as Sri Lanka depends to a large extent on the resources available within the country. Sri Lanka, fortunately is endowed with a rich source of indigenous plant materials and from early ages scientists have been interested in the medicinal and commercial value of some of these plants. Over the past few decades over a 1000 species of plants and a lesser number of animal species have been subjected to biological and chemical investigations by Sri Lankan natural products chemistry scientists. These research activities are concentrated in a few institutions in Sri Lanka which have a mandate to carry out research in this specific area and where there are many researchers with similar interests and expertise in this area.

The present study was carried out to assess the productivity of natural products chemistry research carried out in Sri Lanka during the period 1975 – 2000, across the network of institutions where natural products research is carried out.

The primary data source for this study was the Science Citation Index Expanded produced by the Institute for Scientific Information of the USA. By selecting "Sri Lanka" in the address field, it was possible to extract the full information pertaining to the publications of Sri Lankan scientists.

The results indicate that when viewed in the context of publications in international journals listed in the SCIE, the productivity of natural products chemistry research carried out in Sri Lanka is highest in the University of Peradeniya (specially the Chemistry department), and is unsurpassed by researchers in any other institution in the country. In fact the publications from researchers of the UoP accounts for 60% of the total Sri Lankan natural products research publications for the period 1975 – 2000.

The University of Peradeniya is followed by the University of Colombo (mainly research on marine natural products and spermicidal activity), University of Sri Jayawardenepure (research is mainly concentrated on Ayurvedic drugs), ITI (research on spices and essential oils), Institute of Fundamental Studies (research on anti-HIV compounds and saponins) and the MRI (research on Medicinal Plants). In fact, except for the University of Colombo and ITI, the other institutions have been late starters.

However, a staggering observation of our study is the phenomenal decrease in productivity of UoP in terms of publications, towards the end of the last decade, which has apparently been counter checked by productive trends at the Institute of Fundamental Studies and Univ. of Colombo.

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