

Two Colombo Faculty Medical students produce:
Asia Pacific region's first compact disc on poisons information

Two final year medical students in the Colombo Medical Faculty are being credited with producing the first compact Information CD on poisons in the Asia Pacific Region.



The two Medicos, Kelum Pelpola and Taraka Perera presented their diskette at the 5th Asia Pacific Toxicology Conference held in Colombo last month (August 6) where the chief guest was Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva.

Taraka Perera(Left) and Kelum Pelpola(Right)

Prof. Ravindra Fernando head of the National Poisons Information Centre in Sri Lanka writing to us on this event states;

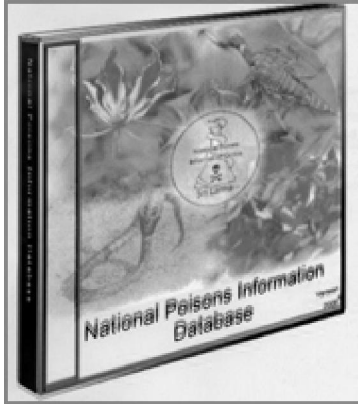
A 'poison' can be defined as any substance that impairs health or destroys life when ingested, inhaled or absorbed by the body in relatively small amounts.

In Sri Lanka, over 80,000 patients are admitted to State hospitals for poisoning every year. In 2000, 2666 patients died of poisoning, and it is the fourth leading cause of death in State hospitals. Sri Lanka has one of the highest rates of suicides in the world, as a result of nearly two thousand deaths caused by ingesting liquid pesticides.

Being more informed about poisons and the management of poisoning is essential under these settings. Physicians or any doctor for that matter should find information about poisons and its management handy to use in the emergency setting.

A book on 'Management of Poisoning' written by me is available and it is freely distributed under the patronage of the National Poisons Information Centre, among doctors.

However, with the dawn of the new millennium, 'e-knowledge' has become a buzz word. Addressing this issue, Kelum Pelpola and Taraka Perera, two medical students of the A/L 2000 batch of Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, have designed a compact disc which was geared to greet the new information age with accuracy, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.



The compact disc brings to light some innovations:

The opening menu - the main menu is divided into five different sections namely, animal poisons, plant poisons, household and industrial chemicals, drugs and agro chemicals. This enables easy access from the opening page. It also enables the users outside the medical field to access data in a more systematic way.

Detailed and emergency sections - Two sections on 'emergency' and 'detailed version' for every entry of poisoning have been introduced. The 'emergency' section includes the clinical features and management only, while the detailed section has more information about the poison including research articles whenever possible.

Search page - The search page contains basic instructions of how to perform a search. After doing the search, the pages are indexed according to priority, where the first entry denotes the most relevant page for the searched word.

Image gallery - this contains images of related animals and plants currently. It would be further updated in the future.

This compact disk could be used as an excellent learning and reference tool by undergraduates as well as medical professionals. It would also enable the medical professionals in Sri Lanka to refer the information on poisons and its management with efficiency and ease. It could also be reproduced easily and updated with minimal hassle.

The cost will not be an issue since a compact disk can be produced with a total cost of around Rs. 40. Another advantage is that it could be used with minimum technical requirements, specially in the Sri Lankan setting.

The compact disk was created in a format that could be converted into a website. That website was created recently and can be accessed at www.npid.tk.

The website functions as the official site of the National Poisons Information Centre. It is a comprehensive website which deals with management of poisoning, and is the first of its kind in South Asia.

The site is also has a 'forum' where anybody who is interested in the topic of management of poisoning can have discussions about the major issues, newest developments etc. Registration at the site and forum could be done by visiting www.npid.tk.

The registered members would be constantly updated regarding the new developments and other major important issues in management of poisoning in Sri Lanka.

The compact disk and the website were launched as the 'National Poisons Information Database' at the inauguration of the 5th Asia Pacific Toxicology conference held in Sri Lanka on August 6, 2006 where Minister of Health Nimal Siripala de Silva was the chief guest.