

Editors View

New Horizons

Dr. Rukshanie De Silva
Secretary, SLSLM.



As we begin the New Year, I take pride in reflecting on our efforts to bring lifestyle medicine closer to both our members and the broader community. With the global shift from a "sick care" model to a "health care" model, lifestyle medicine provides an innovative, evidence-based approach to managing chronic diseases based on addressing modifiable root causes. In Sri Lanka, our initiatives focus on raising awareness, developing skills, and integrating lifestyle medicine into our healthcare ecosystem. Our goal with our readership is to make you an empowered ambassador of health behaviour change which our patients and communities can emulate.

In his New Year message, SLSLM president Dr Samandika Saparamadu speaks about the remarkable progress made in the past year which is comprehensively captured in 'SLSLM diaries'. Dr Samandika emphasized our focus on education and training while expanding into research initiatives. A significant milestone in this regard is the establishment of the Preventive Research Center, which focuses on participatory translational research in lifestyle medicine. This initiative aims to address the local evidence gap while delivering practical, community-based solutions to underserved populations. Discover more on page 17.

With many exciting programs in the pipeline the 2nd Lifestyle Medicine Academic conference is set to be the pinnacle of our calendar year 2025.



In a nutshell:

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"I was taught that the way of progress was neither swift nor easy."

— Marie Curie

Editors View

New Horizons

Please mark September 19th to the 21st in your calendar and await more information in our next issue.

Social connectedness is an often neglected pillar in this digital age marked by individualism and self-centric behaviour. The feature article titled 'Let's embrace the strength of our relationships for a healthier tomorrow!' spotlights the significant health implications of this pillar and provides evidence on the importance of fostering healthy relationships. SLSLM inaugural Member Meetup provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen the pillar of social connectedness among our members while sharing essential insights on lifestyle medicine. Inspirational patient testimonials highlighted the potential for health behaviour change, challenging existing norms.

Misinformation is another challenge with social media providing unsolicited advice with detrimental impact. Myth vs Fact is a novel addition to our newsletter to debunk common myths with evidence. In Newsreel we continue to focus on impactful research in lifestyle medicine and in the future we hope to showcase our own studies.

We are proud to provide a new page on culinary medicine as we bring to you easy to make delicious recipes backed by nutrition facts. Read on food as medicine on page 30.

We hope our January issue motivates you to embark on your own fact finding journey and inspire you to be a part of our newsletter family. Happy reading!



President's Wishes-2025

Dr. Samandika Saparamadu

President and Acting Vice President of Research, SLSLM.



Dear Members, Colleagues, and Well-Wishers of the Sri Lankan Society of Lifestyle Medicine,

At the commencement of this new year of 2025, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for what we have accomplished together at a very low overhead cost. This year has been a testament to the power of teamwork, dedication, and a shared vision to redefine healthcare in Sri Lanka with lifestyle medicine in its foundation. I am delighted to reflect on our stories and outline our aspirations for 2025.

The core commitment of the Sri Lankan Society of Lifestyle Medicine (SLSLM) is to address the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through evidence-based lifestyle interventions introduced through incremental changes to primary healthcare. The core principles of the lifestyle medicine healthcare model are group consultations, personalized care, health promotion, and social prescribing.

This year 2024 has been remarkable for SLSLM in numerous ways. Under the leadership of Rasarie Wimalana, our Vice President of Membership, we launched the highly successful Member Hangout Sessions. These eight web-based sessions explored unique aspects of lifestyle medicine, serving as journal clubs to encourage discussions and connections among members. The Member Meetup, organized by our VP of Membership and supported by all board members, was a vibrant event celebrated by attendees at Waters Edge Hotel. Highlights included interactive sessions, expert talks, and inspiring patient testimonials.

The SLSLM Webinar Series 2024 featured six engaging sessions, bringing together experts from around the globe to explore key themes in lifestyle medicine. Esteemed speakers included professionals from the Australian Society of Lifestyle Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, American College of Lifestyle Medicine, and other leading organizations across Malaysia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

Thanks to Mufeedha Fausz, our Vice President of Education, six physicians and professionals were trained and successfully passed the IBLM certification exam - a 100% success rate! Furthermore, we received a generous USD 26,000 grant in training funds for 2025 from the Lifestyle Medicine Foundation, California. This funding opens up exciting opportunities to provide more affordable and accessible training programs for physicians and professionals in 2025.

Spearheaded by the VP of Research, Secretary, Rukshanie De Silva, and ex-board member, Himel Kalambarchi, we achieved an important milestone by securing our second research grant, SLCIM Research Grant 2024. This facilitated the establishment of the Preventive Research Center at the Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka - the first of its kind in the country to drive community-based participatory research addressing NCDs and infectious diseases of poverty through behaviour change interventions in underserved communities.

President's Wishes-2025

This collaborative research center is at office A203, Faculty of Medicine (Pre clinical complex), Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

The newly operational SLSLM Community Hub, led by our VP of Communications, Kasun Eranga, and his team, will continue to become a vital platform for public awareness and engagement - part of the strategic approach of SLSLM for demand creation. Collaborative efforts by our Directors of Digital Assets and Professional Networking, along with our VP Education and VP Membership, brought lifestyle medicine to the forefront at the U.S. Embassy Health Fair and the Suwa Diviya Health Fair 2024 at Arcade Independence Square.

A special mention to Creative Director Khayali John and her husband, Andrew John, for their unwavering support in planning, designing, and executing SLSLM initiatives. I also would like to thank each and every Board member of the SLSLM for their tireless work and perseverance in making our work effective and impactful. In the meantime, our membership base surpassed 100, with active engagement from members and at times even their families. This collective effort has been instrumental in driving our mission forward. I also extend heartfelt thanks to our sponsors, whose generosity and belief in our mission have made these achievements possible.

As we look ahead, 2025 promises to be a year of innovation and impact. We aim to expand our training and education programs for health professionals and promote more international collaborations to enrich our research initiatives. Furthermore, most importantly, my team and I envision establishing a Policy Advocacy Agency - a non-

profit coalition of stakeholders from sectors including community organizations and state, non-state, and international institutions - to influence upstream determinants of NCDs in Sri Lanka focusing on underserved communities and lifestyle medicine's integration into Sri Lanka's primary healthcare system. We also hope to strengthen our member engagement strategies this year through technology and events, including the second Academic Conference of the SLSLM from 19-21 September 2025. Additionally, we are looking to expand our board by filling in vacant positions to bring in diverse perspectives and expertise. On a personal note, I intend to hand over the baton of leadership to someone who can bring fresh and better ideas with renewed energy. It is time for new leadership to continue advancing SLSLM's mission and vision, ensuring its growth and sustained impact.

Your continued involvement, ideas, and passion are the driving forces behind SLSLM's success. Thank you for being part of this transformative journey.

Samandika Saparamadu

President and Acting Vice President of Research, SLSLM.



Feature Article

Let's embrace the strength of our relationships for a healthier tomorrow!

Dr. R. Hiruni Poornima*MSc in Food and Nutrition, University of Peradeniya
Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine & Surgery (Hons.), University
of Colombo, DipIBLM*

Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives, often as part of daily life. Did you know that chronic stress can lead to numerous medical conditions, some of which can be serious or even fatal? Prolonged stress is linked to various medical conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, susceptibility to infections and autoimmune diseases [1]. Chronic stress can slow recovery from illnesses, contribute to conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), fibromyalgia, and chronic back pain [2]. Stress-induced hormonal changes, such as elevated cortisol levels, can raise blood sugar, impair insulin sensitivity, and contribute to insulin resistance, potentially leading to type 2 diabetes [3]. Additionally, stress can suppress immune function, increase inflammation, and promote behaviours like smoking or poor diet that raises cancer risk [4]. It can also lead to sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [5].

Lifestyle Medicine is an integrative approach focused on preventing, treating, and managing chronic diseases through lifestyle modifications. It emphasizes six key pillars: nutrition, which advocates for a plant-based, whole-food diet; physical activity, promoting regular exercise for

overall health; sleep, ensuring adequate and restorative rest; stress management, using techniques like mindfulness and relaxation to reduce stress; social connectedness, fostering supportive relationships for mental and emotional well-being; and avoidance of harmful substances, encouraging the elimination of smoking, excessive alcohol, and other illicit substances. While the first five pillars are often prioritized in healthcare settings, social connectedness is frequently overlooked, despite its profound impact on health. However, social health is harder to measure and incorporate into clinical practice compared to more tangible health behaviors, which is why it often receives less attention in conventional treatment plans [6]. To maintain a healthy and stress-free life, lifestyle medicine emphasises the importance of social connectedness. Building and nurturing relationships with family, friends, and community members can provide essential emotional support and a buffer against trauma, loneliness and anxiety. Strong social ties foster a sense of belonging and safety, reduce feelings of

Feature Article

Let's embrace the strength of our relationships for a healthier tomorrow!

isolation, and encourage healthy behaviours, all of which contribute to better mental and physical health. By prioritising our connections with others, we can create a robust support system that enhances our resilience and overall well-being, allowing us to navigate life's challenges with greater ease [6,10]

Social connectedness refers to the relationships and social networks that individuals form and maintain, which significantly influence their overall health and well-being [7]. The bonds we form with others or "Relationships", can be close (family, close friends) or more distant (acquaintances, community members). The depth and meaningfulness of these relationships, including feelings of trust, support, and understanding portrays the "Quality of Interactions". Feeling accepted and valued within a social group or community, which enhances our overall well-being; "Sense of Belonging" is what drives our social connections[8]. These relationships provide comfort and understanding during challenging times while validating feelings and experiences. Sharing burdens with others fosters collective problem-solving and influences mutual behaviour which is conceptualised in all group based therapy. Positive interactions and engagement in social activities serve as distractions, promoting joy and belonging. Moreover, social networks encourage accountability for maintaining healthy

habits, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition, which are known to reduce stress. Interacting with others also enhances resilience by providing insights into coping strategies and offering constructive feedback. The release of positive neurotransmitters during social interactions boosts mood and decreases stress, while a sense of community creates support systems that help individuals navigate challenges.

Social connectedness is not only a protective factor for mental health but also contributes to longer, healthier lives [10,11]. It is one of the 6 factors contributing to healthy aging[11]. On the contrary, social isolation is a risk factor for mortality as significant as smoking or alcohol dependence [11]. In Sri Lanka the breakdown of social networks is paving the way for a rapidly ageing population with poor quality of life [12]. The happiness calendar, a health project launched to improve the mental well being of children and families in Sri Lanka was based on community empowerment to self-identify the determinants of mental well being. Although appearing rather simplistic with each member scoring their happiness daily on a calendar it filled the communication gap through active family discussions and leading to better relationships in the family, supported children and parent bonding and fetal health in pregnant mothers[13].

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This led to the development of the “Happy Village” concept to promote health in villages and this was implemented in Badulla District during the Covid-19 outbreak.

This approach has empowered villagers to act collectively as a community towards their health goals to prevent Covid-19 setting a good example of the profound impact of social connections and relationships towards wellbeing [14].

The Story of ‘Peraliya Village’ is another real life testament to the power of social connections. Peraliya, a small coastal village in Sri Lanka, was devastated by the 2004 tsunami, with nearly every family losing someone in the disaster. The survivors faced immense grief, trauma, and loss, yet the village’s ability to rebuild was largely driven by the strength of their social connectedness rooted in socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs.

In the aftermath, villagers came together to support one another emotionally, share resources, and collectively mourn their losses. Elders offered guidance, while youth helped with clean-up and reconstruction efforts. This strong community network played a crucial role in mitigating the psychological impacts of the disaster, such as depression and PTSD without formal psychological support[17].

Did you know?

- Globally over 1 in 4 experience social isolation.
- Single most important predictor of happiness and longevity is close relationships (Yes, irrespective of money, fame or status. *(Harvard Adult development study)*)
- Happiness is infectious. It trickles down within a social network upto a 3 degree separation (Eg: friend’s friend’s friend) ensuring sustained joy within the group. *(Framingham heart study)*



Feature Article

Let's embrace the strength of our relationships for a healthier tomorrow!

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Myth vs. Fact

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MYTH: Bee's honey, being all natural, is the ideal choice to add a sweet taste.

FACT: Although honey is a better alternative to refined sugar, mindful intake is advisable. If craving something sweet, always rely on whole food like fruits for added benefits

The consumption of honey has gained popularity as a natural alternative to refined sugar, often promoted for its purported health benefits. However, when compared to whole fruits as a source of sweetness, it is important to consider various factors, including glycemic index, sugar composition, calorie density, and overall nutritional value. This essay argues that while honey has some benefits over refined sugar, whole fruits offer superior health advantages.

One significant aspect to consider is the glycemic index (GI), which measures how quickly a food raises blood glucose levels after consumption. Honey, with a GI of around 58, falls within the moderate range (1), meaning it can still lead to moderate increases in blood glucose, especially when consumed in large amounts. In contrast, many whole fruits have lower GI values. For instance, apples have a GI of approximately 38, while berries typically range from 25 to 40 (2). The fiber content in fruits slows the absorption of sugars, promoting a more controlled release of glucose into the bloodstream. This makes fruits a better choice for maintaining stable blood sugar levels.

When examining sugar composition, honey primarily consists of fructose and glucose, two simple sugars, with fructose making up around 40% and glucose around 30% (3). Although fructose is metabolized mainly in the liver, excessive consumption can contribute to insulin resistance, fatty liver, and obesity (4). While whole fruits also contain fructose, they provide fiber and other nutrients that aid in the metabolism of sugars. The fiber helps slow the absorption of both fructose and glucose, preventing rapid blood sugar spikes. Additionally, fruits such as apples and berries are rich in antioxidants, which help protect the body from oxidative stress and inflammation (2).

Another crucial factor is calorie density, which refers to the number of calories in a given weight or volume of food. Honey is highly calorie-dense, providing around 300 calories per 100 grams (1). This means that even small amounts of honey contribute significantly to daily caloric intake. Whole fruits, on the other hand, have a much lower calorie density. For example, apples contain approximately 50-60 calories per 100 grams, while

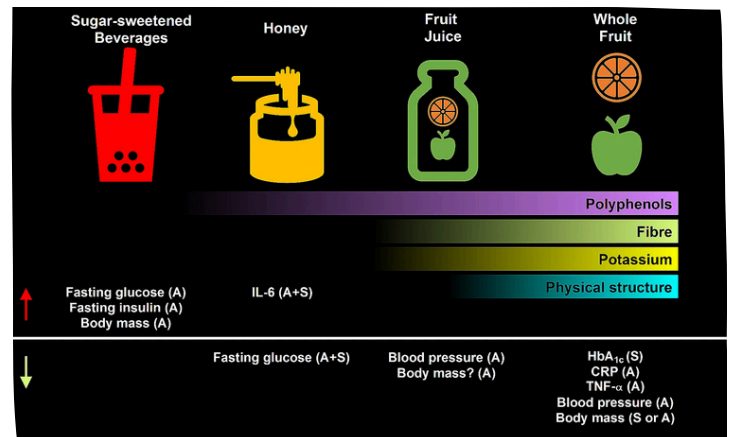
Myth vs. Fact

strawberries offer about 30 calories per 100 grams (6). The high water and fiber content of fruits contribute to their low-calorie density, promoting satiety without adding excessive calories. As a result, fruits are a more sustainable and weight-friendly option.

While honey contains beneficial compounds such as flavonoids and phenolic acids, which exhibit antioxidant properties (7), whole fruits offer a broader range of nutrients and health benefits. Fruits provide essential vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin C, potassium, and folate, which are critical for immune function, bone health, and energy metabolism (8). Moreover, the fiber in fruits plays a key role in regulating blood sugar levels, improving digestive health, and promoting feelings of fullness (5). Unlike honey, which is predominantly composed of sugars, fruits provide a more balanced nutritional profile that supports overall health.

In addition, whole fruits contain various antioxidants, such as flavonoids and carotenoids, which help neutralize harmful free radicals in the body, thereby reducing the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer (4). These health benefits are absent in honey, making fruits a more comprehensive and nutritious source of natural sweetness.

Furthermore, recent research suggests that natural sweeteners like monk fruit extract may serve as effective alternatives to sucrose and honey, particularly for individuals with type 2 diabetes (9).



Comparison of sugar source with its physiological response when consumed as excess energy (A) or substituted as an energy source (S)

Image from; Gonzalez, J.T. Are all sugars equal? Role of the food source in physiological responses to sugars with an emphasis on fruit and fruit juice. *Eur J Nutr* 63, 1435–1451 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00394-024-03365-3>

For instance, studies on synbiotic yogurt sweetened with monk fruit extract have shown promising results in improving glucose regulation and gut microbiota in rats with diabetes (10). Such sweeteners, when incorporated into functional foods, may offer more effective means of managing blood sugar levels than honey.

Additional evidence supports the role of date fruits, which are rich in polyphenols, in promoting blood glucose regulation. Polyphenols in date palm fruits have been shown to inhibit the aggregation of toxic amylin peptides, a key factor in the development of type 2 diabetes (5). These polyphenols not only aid in blood sugar management but may also reduce the risk of amyloid-related diseases, offering further health benefits when compared to honey.

Myth vs. Fact

Although honey is often considered a healthier alternative to refined sugar, its high calorie density and sugar content make it less suitable for long-term health. Whole fruits, with their lower glycemic index, balanced sugar composition, lower calorie density, and richer nutritional profile, provide far superior health benefits. Additionally, emerging natural sweeteners like monk fruit extract may offer even more promising alternatives for those looking to manage blood sugar levels and enhance overall health. When considering long-term health, whole fruits are the most beneficial source of natural sweetness.

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US Embassy Health Fair

A Day of Wellness: Engaging US Embassy Employees in Lifestyle Medicine

Dr. Mufeedha Fausz
VP Education, SLSLM



SLSLM had the honour of participating in a unique and engaging Health Fair organized by the United States (US) Embassy in Colombo on the 29th of August 2024. The Health Fair exclusively catered to the employees of the American Embassy numbering over 400. The fair provided a hands-on opportunity for individuals to explore lifestyle medicine (LM) in an engaging and interactive environment. With the mission of empowering employees to make informed choices about their health, the event featured a range of exciting activities, each designed to encourage positive behaviour change.

The event was designed to ensure that employees not only learned about lifestyle medicine but also actively participated in fun and practical ways to make lasting changes. The following activities took center stage during the fair:

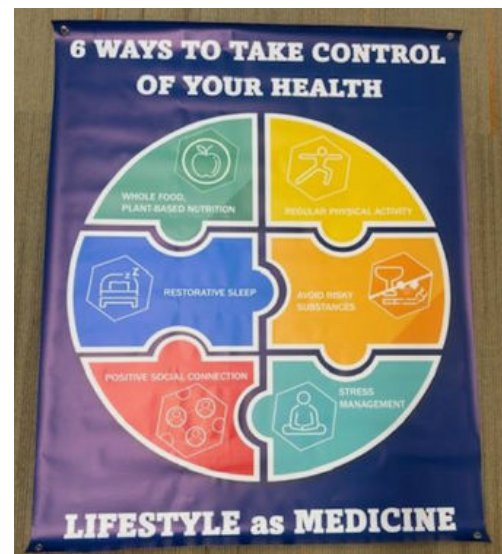
- **Lifestyle Medicine Questionnaire and Scoring:** Prior to the event, all employees were emailed an LM questionnaire and scoring sheets were printed and handed to participants. This simple yet insightful tool helped employees assess their current health habits and score their lifestyle based on key LM principles. The results provided a personalized snapshot of each participant's strengths and areas for improvement, setting the stage for further discussions and goal-setting. LM practitioners were readily available for a discussion of the results with participants.

US Embassy Health Fair

A Day of Wellness: Engaging US Embassy Employees in Lifestyle Medicine

- **Speed Dating for Lifestyle Medicine:** In a creative and highly engaging format, the "Speed Dating" session allowed participants to engage in brief, one-on-one conversations with experts in various aspects of lifestyle medicine. This fast-paced session provided an opportunity for employees to ask questions and get advice on individual pillars. The format was designed to give participants quick, actionable tips in a short amount of time, making it easy for them to gather key insights that they could implement immediately.
- **Fitness Challenges:** To emphasize the importance of physical activity, the Health Fair included a series of fitness challenges. Participants were encouraged to join in physical activities designed to test their strength, flexibility, and endurance.
- **Zumba Workout:** One of the highlights of the day was a Zumba workout session, by Dr. Gihani Jayaweera, a certified LM professional and a Zumba instructor. Gihani led participants through a series of dance moves to lively music, encouraging everyone to get moving while having fun. The session showcased the benefits of cardiovascular exercise and highlighted how enjoyable staying active can be when combined with social interaction and music.
- **Talk on Sleep:** Understanding the critical role that sleep plays in overall health, a dedicated talk on "Sleeping your way to a longer life" was held during the fair. Practitioners discussed how restorative

sleep affects not just energy levels, but also cognitive function, immune health, mood, and even weight management. Participants learned about the science behind sleep cycles, the impact of screen time on sleep quality, and practical tips for improving sleep hygiene, such as creating a bedtime routine and optimizing the sleep environment. The session emphasized that good sleep is essential for maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle, making it a key pillar of lifestyle medicine.



US Embassy Health Fair

A Day of Wellness: Engaging US Embassy Employees in Lifestyle Medicine

- **Spin the Wheel Nutrition Quiz:** To make learning about nutrition more engaging, the SLSLM hosted a "Spin the Wheel" quiz. Participants took turns spinning a wheel that landed on different nutrition-related questions. Topics included the benefits of specific food groups, portion control, and healthy eating tips. By participating in this interactive game, employees had the chance to expand their nutrition knowledge in a playful and entertaining manner and win wonderful prizes.
- **Pledge Wall:** The Pledge Wall was an inspiring feature of the Health Fair, where employees wrote down their personal commitments to adopting healthier lifestyle practices. Whether it was committing to eating more vegetables, increasing daily exercise, or prioritizing mental well-being, the pledge wall served as a reminder of the collective goal of fostering wellness in the workplace and beyond. This symbolic gesture encouraged participants to take ownership of their health journey and create long-term commitments to wellness.
- **SMART Goal Sheets:** To further support sustainable behavior change, participants were provided with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goal sheets. These sheets helped employees set realistic and achievable health goals. Whether it was to exercise for 30 minutes a day or reduce stress through mindfulness practices, the SMART goal sheets offered a practical framework for making measurable progress in adopting healthier habits.

Multiple dynamic screens were also set up to display key information on the principles of lifestyle medicine. The display highlighted the core pillars of this transformative approach to healthcare with myth busting facts and quick actionable steps one can take towards a transformative health journey.

The SLSLM's participation in the Health Fair provided a platform for embassy employees to learn firsthand how simple lifestyle changes could significantly impact their health. By incorporating the core principles of lifestyle medicine into their daily routines, employees gained valuable insights into how to improve their long-term well-being and prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension.

The event was a huge success in fostering a culture of wellness within the American Embassy. By using fun and innovative approaches to health education, the SLSLM demonstrated how lifestyle medicine can empower individuals to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. As the movement towards lifestyle medicine continues to grow, events like these play a crucial role in shaping a future where wellness is at the heart of every community.



Suwa Diviya Collaboration

Suwa Diviya 'Live well Health Fair' delivered a key message of health and wellbeing – SLSLM joined in on this worthy cause

The "Live Well Health Fair," organized by the Suwa Diviya organization, served as a timely reminder of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyle choices to combat the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases in Sri Lanka's urban communities. The multitude of both young and old that flocked to the Independence Arcade in Colombo is a testament to the growing public interest in this area.

Consultant Physician Dr. Kayathri Peraisamy leads Suwa Diviya, a non-profit organization funded by the Sunshine Foundation for Good, dedicated to addressing the growing burden of diabetes in Sri Lanka. The event was a collaborative effort involving both government and private sector stakeholders. Coinciding with World Diabetes Month, which emphasized diabetes and overall well-being, the fair spotlighted how lifestyle choices influence health and wellness through diverse interactive sessions.

SLSLM was a proud partner in this great initiative spearheading important discussions on lifestyle medicine applications. The President of SLSLM Dr Samandika Saparamadu conducted an insightful dialogue on the impact of health promotion interventions in diabetes prevention both in community setting and via group visits. Speaking through example Dr Samandika narrated the effectiveness of this approach in managing diabetes.



Suvadiviya Collaboration

SLSLM Member and Sports and lifestyle medicine practitioner Dr Namal Wijesinghe addressed key elements of restorative sleep and its influence on disease and well-being. An important yet neglected pillar in lifestyle medicine Dr Namal provided a comprehensive overview of sleep including its physiological function, sleep hygiene practices and some of the common sleep disorders which was well received by the audience.

Dr Gihani Jayaweera, Senior Lecturer and certified lifestyle medicine professional opened the conversation exploring the public perspectives on making healthy lifestyle choices and the internal and external barriers to making the right choice. It was a fruitful discussion focusing on the pillar of social connectedness and highlighting practical ways to eliminate undue stress posed by failing to sustain a healthy behaviour change.



The very first Preventive Research Center in Sri Lanka:

Bringing hope to the marginalised communities through impactful research

The establishment of the Preventive Research Center (PRC) is a significant milestone for the SLSLM, advancing translational research in lifestyle medicine to foster health behaviour transformation in our communities. Officially inaugurated on January 2, 2025, with the signing of an MoU between the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL) and SLSLM, the Center's realization owes much to the leadership of Dr. Samandika Saparamadu, mentorship by Professor Kumudu Wijewardena, and support from Professor Nirmali Wickramaratne, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine (FoM), SUSL.

The main aim of the Center is to develop and apply practical, cost-effective, and scalable solutions for preventing and reversing NCDs and infectious diseases of poverty in underserved communities in Sri Lanka through participatory and translational research. Located at the FoM, SUSL the Center serves as an apex body, connecting key stakeholders—including policymakers, local agencies, and community representatives—for translational research and advocacy.



The very first Preventive Research Center in Sri Lanka:

The PRC has already secured two research grants and plans to recruit staff from the Ratnapura region. In addition to research, the PRC will engage in extensive knowledge dissemination. It will host academic activities, conferences, and symposia, publishing findings in peer-reviewed journals. The Center aims to influence policy through evidence-based recommendations, leveraging collaboration with an Advisory Panel comprising researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community members.

Capacity building is another priority for the Center, fostering research skills among clinicians, academics, community health workers, and students. It will encourage student-led research projects and emphasize community empowerment by involving underserved populations—including rural, estate, and low-income groups—in all stages of research design, planning, and implementation.

The Center's initiatives will be monitored and evaluated through a robust framework, tracking key performance indicators and conducting impact assessments. By leveraging the strengths of SLSLM and SUSL, and partnering with state departments, ministries, and international organizations, the PRC aspires to create a sustainable ecosystem for effective prevention models. Its work could serve as a template for addressing similar health challenges in other low- and middle-income countries, enhancing the global impact of lifestyle medicine interventions.



SLSLM Inaugural Member Meetup 2024



The Sri Lanka Society of Lifestyle Medicine (SLSLM) hosted its inaugural member meetup in November 2024 at Waters Edge Hotel, marking a milestone for lifestyle medicine in Sri Lanka. The event brought together health professionals and members to celebrate the transformative potential of lifestyle medicine and share inspiring success stories.

The day began with an engaging session by Dr. Raaidah Wahab, SLSLM's Director of Digital Assets, fostering connections among attendees. SLSLM President, Dr. Samandika Saparamadu, outlined the principles of lifestyle medicine, emphasizing group consultations, personalized care, health promotion, and social prescribing as cost-effective strategies poised to revolutionize Sri Lanka's primary healthcare system.

Key presentations followed: Dr. Rukshanie De Silva, SLSLM Secretary, elaborated on the clinical relevance of lifestyle medicine, while Dr. Arunie Malwatta, Director of Professional Networking, highlighted the importance of nutrition strategies. A panel discussion led by Professor Diyanath Samarasinghe and Dr. Khayali Wilson explored the transition from reactive "sick care" to proactive "health care."

A highlight of the event was patient testimonials from individuals who shared how lifestyle medicine empowered them to overcome health challenges, including diabetes remission.

SLSLM Inaugural Member Meetup 2024

These stories, along with insights from Dr. Rasarie Wimalana, Vice President of Membership, showcased the tangible impact of this innovative approach.

The session concluded with remarks by Dr. Mufeedha Fauze and Dr. Kasun Eranga, emphasizing opportunities in education, research, and outreach within the field. They expressed gratitude to attendees and reaffirmed SLSLM's commitment to addressing Sri Lanka's non-communicable disease (NCD) burden through patient-centered, culturally relevant solutions.

SLSLM's efforts are building a foundation for a healthier, sustainable future in Sri Lanka, prioritizing prevention, empowerment, and well-being through lifestyle medicine.



Member Hangout

Connecting, Sharing and Inspiring

A remarkable initiative by our VP membership Dr Rasarie Wimalana, bringing about meaningful engagement within our membership with a relaxed discussion on highly coveted Lifestyle Medicine topics. Held virtually the program commenced on the 25th of February 2024 and was held fortnightly on Sundays at 5pm.

These hangouts were designed to foster connection, share knowledge, and even discover talented members who might contribute to SLSLM endeavours. The 45-minute sessions were relaxed, interactive, and flexible in format.

These sessions covered an array of topics based on the 6 pillars of lifestyle medicine also including popular topics such as intermittent fasting and LM practices in children. Each session was guided by a lead whether it's a board member, an IBLM practitioner, or an enthusiastic SLSLM member—with the freedom to choose how they want to steer the conversation. These sessions can be viewed on our Youtube page; with the following link <https://www.youtube.com/@srilankansocietyoflifestyle462>

We hope to make these sessions a recurring platform for meaningful conversations and lasting connections! So stay tuned for the next round staring soon.



SLSLM 2024 Webinar Series

From June to December, the Sri Lankan Society of Lifestyle Medicine (SLSLM) hosted a highly anticipated webinar series, bringing together leading experts in the field of lifestyle medicine. This series provided a unique opportunity for healthcare professionals and the general public to deepen their understanding of key health topics, ranging from chronic disease management to the transformative power of nature. Each session was designed to offer practical insights and evidence-based strategies to optimize health and prevent chronic conditions.

Here's a look at the key topics and expert speakers who contributed to this enriching educational experience:

1. Dr. Sivaneswaran Poobalasingam: *"Lifestyle Medicine in Diabetes Remission"*



Kicking off the webinar series in June, was Dr. Sivaneswaran Poobalasingam (MD, Dip IBLM) from Malaysia. He is a leading expert in lifestyle medicine and a consultant for the World Health Organization's Lifestyle Medicine for Diabetes Remission Project. He shared evidence-based strategies to transform diabetes care. Dr. Poobalasingam discussed the physiology of insulin sensitivity and insulin resistance and how lifestyle interventions—such as plant-based diet and its role in reversing insulin resistance can help reverse Type 2 diabetes. Participants learned about the science behind diabetes remission and the practical steps that can lead to improved blood sugar control and better overall health outcomes.

2. Dr. Tashiya Mirando: *"Optimizing Health for Menopause and Thereafter"*

In July, Dr. Tashiya Mirando (MBChB MRCGP, DRCOG, DFSRH, DipIBLM) delivered a highly informative webinar focused on optimizing health for women during menopause and beyond. The session explored the physical, emotional, and hormonal changes that occur during menopause and how women can manage these shifts through lifestyle interventions and the role of hormone replacement therapy. Dr. Mirando emphasized the importance of all of us taking ownership of our health, understanding menopause and 'bio-hacking' ourselves to better overall well-being. Throughout the session she also mentioned many books, podcasts and other sources to learn more on both LM and menopause.



SLSLM 2024 Webinar Series

3. Dr. Ilan Kotek: *"Planetary Health"*

In August, Dr. Ilan Kotek (DO, BA) took the webinar series in an exciting direction with a talk on "Planetary Health," a concept that connects human health with the well-being of the planet. Dr. Kotek delved into the critical connections between lifestyle medicine, food systems, and planetary health. He drew many parallels between different levels of organization, biology and life and how industrial agriculture also requires a 'lifestyle change'. He discussed in the podcast regenerative agricultural practices, disproportionate use of land for livestock, meat and dairy industry and the public understanding the importance of agricultural work among other aspects and the necessity for food policy changes globally and creating a more sustainable, nurturing framework for our planet.



4. Dr. Simon Mathews: *"The Principles of Health Behaviour Change"*



In September, Dr. Simon Mathews (FACLM, FASLM, MHIthSci, DipIBLM, MAPS, NBC-HWC, PCC) led a session on "The Principles of Health Behaviour Change," focusing on the psychological and behavioral aspects of adopting healthy lifestyles. Dr. Mathews explained the common factors in behavior change theories in detail- motivation, behavioral and environmental interaction, stages of change, self efficacy, goal setting and the effect of social connection and influences. And how these can be applied in practice. His session was especially valuable for healthcare providers looking to support their patients in making lasting changes.

5. Prof. John Stevens: *"Group Consultation"*

In October, Prof. John Stevens (FACLM, FASLM, MHIthSci, DipIBLM, MAPS, NBC-HWC, PCC) offered an insightful webinar on "Group Consultation," an innovative approach to patient care in lifestyle medicine. Group consultations allow healthcare professionals to engage multiple patients at once, creating a supportive environment where individuals can share experiences, learn from each other, and receive tailored health advice. Prof. Stevens spoke in detail about the hierarchy of disease causality, best practices for conducting group consultations and highlighted their effectiveness in improving patient outcomes.



SLSLM 2024 Webinar Series

6. Melissa Sunderman: *"Nature as Medicine"*

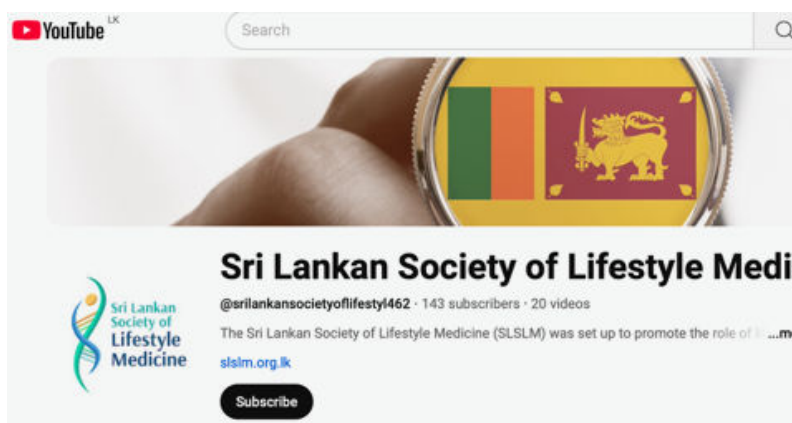
Rounding off the webinar series in December, Dr Meliss Sunderman (DO, DipABLM, FACLM) captivated the audience with a session on "Nature as Medicine." Known as 'Doctor outdoors' she discussed the growing body of evidence supporting the healing power of nature, from the mental health benefits of outdoor activities to the physical health benefits of spending time in natural environments. She spoke in detail about the benefits of forest bathing, viewing nature, listening to birdsong and blue spaces. Sunderman emphasized how incorporating nature into daily life—whether through gardening, hiking, or simply spending time outdoors—can have profound effects on overall well-being and a reduction in NCD's.



Please check our youtube page to access the webinars above.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoRDWHWXd6TpkYJR8fpxmg>.

Stay tuned for upcoming events and educational opportunities
as we continue our mission to inspire healthier lives through
lifestyle medicine!



Common metrics introduced to measure lifestyle medicine intervention outcomes - ACLM

- ACLM expert panel consensus statement on measurements to identify the impact of lifestyle medicine interventions on chronic disease remission and long-term effects sets a benchmark in reporting these outcomes globally
- The goal is to enhance the growing high quality evidence base on lifestyle medicine by providing uniformity in outcome evaluation.
- These measurements are categorised into 10 domains pertaining to key diseases, conditions and risk factors.
- They highlight measurement of disease outcomes independent of other forms of treatment and abide by conventional methods for assessment of disease status or severity.

Source: Kelly et al. *Lifestyle Medicine Performance Measures: An Expert Consensus Statement Defining Metrics to Identify Remission or Long-Term Progress Following Lifestyle Medicine Treatment*. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2024 Feb 20;18(4):567-573. doi: 10.1177/15598276241230237.

Number ^b	Measures for cardiac function
H1	Ejection fraction by echocardiogram
H2	Need for coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) (as defined by ACC/AHA or AACVPR Guidelines*) * American College of Cardiology (ACC)/American Heart Association (AHA) Guidelines for Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery, ACC/AHA Guidelines for Percutaneous Coronary Intervention, American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation
H14	Functional capacity assessment (such as 6-minute walk)
H3	Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol
H4	Triglycerides (TGL)
H5	Waist-hip ration (WHR) (using validated method**) ** Waist circumference and waist-hip ratio: report of a WHO expert consultation (Geneva, 8-11 December 2008) https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241501491
H6	Systolic blood pressure (SBP)
H7	Diastolic blood pressure (DBP)
H9	Cardiac-C-reactive protein (hsCRP)

Common metrics introduced to measure lifestyle medicine intervention outcomes - ACLM

Number ^b	Measures for cardiac medications and procedures
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H10	Dosing of medications with known effects on these measures
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H11	Use of procedures with known effects on these measures
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Number ^b	Measures for patient-centered cardiac health
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H13	Quality of life (using validated method ^{***}) ^{***} Such as CDC HRQOL-14, Standard function SF36 or SF12
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Number ^b	Measures for hypertension
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T1	Systolic blood pressure (SBP)
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T2	Diastolic blood pressure (DBP)
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T3	A reduced need for medications or procedures with known effects on hypertension.
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^aTime between measures should be a minimum of 3 months to document remission or long-term progress

^bNumber in the initial list of candidate statements.

Number ^b	Measures for type 2 diabetes and prediabetes
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J1	HbA1c
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J4	Fasting serum glucose
----	-----------------------

J8	Medications/procedures with known effect on these measures - Net reduction or no increase in medications - No procedures or surgeries between measures
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Number ^b	Measures for metabolic syndrome (MetS)
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M1	Waist circumference
----	---------------------

M2	Triglycerides
----	---------------

Common metrics introduced to measure lifestyle medicine intervention outcomes - ACLM

Number ^b	Measures for metabolic syndrome (MetS)
M3	HDL
M4	Blood pressure
M5	Fasting blood glucose
M6	No increase in meds or procedures with known effects on these five measures

^aTime between measures should be a minimum of 3 months to document remission or long-term progress.

^bNumber in the initial list of candidate statements.

Number ^b	Measures for inflammatory conditions
I2	Cardiac CRP (hsCRP)
I3	The specific standard measure(s) for specific inflammatory diseases (e.g., RF for RA)

Number ^b	Measures for inflammatory condition patient-centered measures
I6	SF12 (standard form 12, shortened SF36)
I7	VAS pain scale (visual analog scale)

^aTime between measures should be a minimum of 3 months to document remission or long-term progress.

^bNumber in the initial list of candidate statements.

Number ^b	Measures for chronic kidney disease
K2	Serum creatinine
K3	eGFR (glomerular filtration rate)
K4	Creatinine clearance

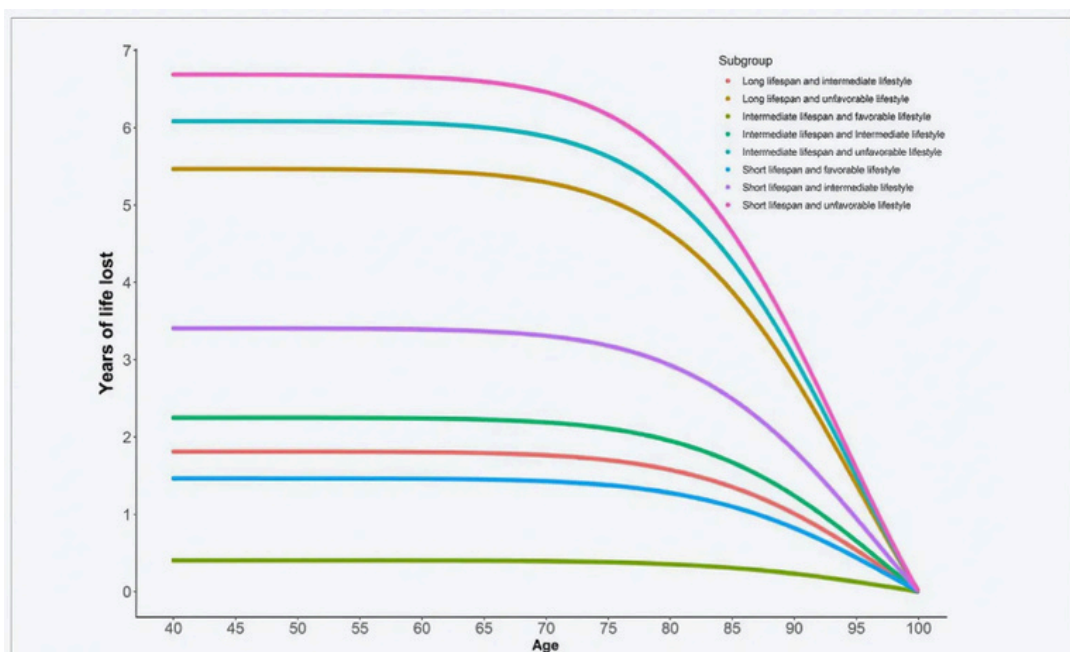
^aTime between measures should be a minimum of 3 months to document remission or long-term progress.

^bNumber in the initial list of candidate statements.

A healthy lifestyle can offset 60% of your unlucky genes that predispose to a short lifespan

- A longitudinal multiple cohort study using data from 353,742 adults of European ancestry looked at the implications of genetic predisposition and lifestyle scores on lifespan.
- The participants were categorised into 3 groups of genetically determined lifespan (Long, intermediate and short) based on polygenic risk scores for lifespan albeit limited to 19 single nucleotide polymorphisms.
- Their lifestyle was assessed using a weighted lifestyle score derived from no current smoking, moderate alcohol consumption, regular physical activity, healthy body shape, adequate sleep duration, and a healthy diet, categorised into favourable, intermediate, and unfavourable lifestyles.
- It was found that those with high genetic risk resulted in 21% increased risk of death compared to those with a low genetic risk irrespective of lifestyle factors.
- However, those with unhealthy lifestyle factors faced 78% higher risk of premature death (death before 75years) compared to those with a favourable lifestyle irrespective of genetic predisposition.
- The study revealed adherence to overall healthy lifestyle attenuated the genetic risk of shorter lifespan by as much as 5years.
- The 'optimal lifestyle combination' for a prolonged lifespan were derived to be never smoking, regular physical activity, adequate sleep duration, and healthy diet, according to the rank of the size of the effect estimates.
- These results extrapolated from single point lifestyle assessments need further investigation to truly mirror the lifestyle impact.

Source: *Bian Z, Wang L, Fan R, et al Genetic predisposition, modifiable lifestyles, and their joint effects on human lifespan: evidence from multiple cohort studies* BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine 2024;29:255-263.



A bit of gratitude can go a long way; by adding years to your life

- Emerging evidence from the US Nurses' Health Study revealed that those who experienced grateful affect more had a lower risk of all cause mortality after accounting for changes in other confounding factors.
- Gratitude was assessed using a validated gratitude questionnaire amongst 49,275 older registered female nurses in the US between 2016 and 2019 and compared with all cause mortality.
- Those with greater attitude at baseline was associated with a lower hazard of mortality (HR, 0.91; 95% CI, 0.84-0.99)
- When considering cause-specific deaths, death from cardiovascular disease was inversely associated with gratitude (HR, 0.85; 95% CI, 0.73-0.995)
- This study provides initial preliminary evidence of grateful affects link with longevity in older females which need further representative studies

Source: Chen Y, Okereke OI, Kim ES, Tiemeier H, Kubzansky LD, VanderWeele TJ. Gratitude and Mortality Among Older US Female Nurses. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2024 Oct 1;81(10):1030-1038. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.1687. PMID: 38959002; PMCID: PMC11223047.



Mrs. Yagel Azariya
Public Health Professional



Sweet Corn and Vegetables Stir Fry Recipe

Preparation time: around 15 minutes

Ingredients: (approximately 415 g with a serving size of 2 portions)

- Clean Sweet corn kernels - 100g
- Carrot – 1 medium size cut into small pieces
- Green Beans – 7 long strings cut into small pieces
- Onion - 1 medium size chopped
- Garlic – 5 cloves chopped
- Olive Oil – 1 tablespoon
- Salt and pepper



Cooking Method: (Cooking time around 10 minutes)

- Heat a pan on medium flame in the stove and add 1 teaspoon of olive oil to the heated pan.
- Add the garlic and onion to the pan and stir well until onion and garlic becomes translucent.
- Then add the cut pieces of carrot, green beans, and sweet corn kernels into the pan and stir well with garlic and onion.
- Close the lid and keep in the stove for about 5 minutes for the vegetables to cook.
- Once the vegetables are cooked, add a pinch of salt and pepper for taste.
- Again, mix well and keep the lid closed for about 2 minutes then take off from the stove.
- Sweet Corn and Vegetables Stir Fry Recipe is ready to eat with any whole grain for a healthy meal.

Health benefits of sweet corn

- High fiber content slows digestion and controls postprandial blood sugar levels also enhancing satiety.
- A rich source of B vitamins such as Niacin promotes good cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of heart disease, while folate and B12 helps the production of healthy red blood cells. Folate also aids fetal development during pregnancy. Thiamin together with ferulic acid, helps prevent neurodegenerative diseases.
- Vitamin A helps maintain healthy skin and eyes, while its abundance of antioxidants combats inflammation, promoting a youthful appearance.
- Rich source of iron infused with vitamin C facilitates iron absorption and prevents anaemia.

Source: Swapna. G., G. Jadesha and Mahadevu. P. 2020. Sweet Corn – A Future Healthy Human Nutrition Food. *Int.J.Curr.Microbiol.App.Sci.* 9(7): 3859-3865. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2020.907.452>

Nutritional Facts

Nutrient	Amount
Carbohydrate	53.75 g
Fiber	10.24 g
Starch	7.25 g
Sugars	7.69 g
Protein	7.53 g
Fat	16.038 g
Water	332.8 g
Vitamin A	417.86 mcg
Thiamin [Vitamin B1]	0.18 mg
Riboflavin [Vitamin B2]	0.134 mg
Niacin [Vitamin B3]	2.341 mg
Pantothenic acid [Vitamin B5]	0.959 mg
Vitamin B6	0.413 mg
Folate [Vitamin B9]	42.84 mcg
Vitamin C [Ascorbic acid]	30.6 mg
Vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol)	2.78 mg
Vitamin K	37.6 mcg
Calcium	104.8 mg
Iron	1.88 mg
Potassium	861.04 mg
Sodium	455.56 mg



SLSLM E-Newsletter Member Anecdotes Calling All members!



01



Goal

Here's an opportunity for you to share your own Lifestyle medicine journey with us and inspire others.

It's a page dedicated for you!

What we want

A concise write up on your true personal experience related to any of the 6 pillars of lifestyle medicine.

Be creative.

Write your own style.

Word count - Max 750 words

References - Limit to under 10

Images - Maximum 4 (JPG format)

02



03



Deadline

If interested - Reply to info@sllsm.org.lk by
Saturday 8th February 2025

Write up to be submitted by 8th March 2025

Become a member

Come enjoy the benefits of our membership!

- Access our up-to-date educational material on lifestyle medicine
- Join our webinars
- Learn how to become a certified Lifestyle Medicine practitioner



For more information:



<https://www.slsim.org.lk>



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