



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

The future of craniofacial plastic surgery in Sri Lanka

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With the ongoing assistance of Interplast Australia & New Zealand and its teams of volunteer surgeons, an advanced craniofacial surgery service in Sri Lanka could soon be a reality, delegates to the 80th Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

Dr Gayan Ekanayake, from the Plastic Surgery Unit of Sri Lanka's National Hospital, undertook an initial resource feasibility assessment to determine whether an advanced craniofacial surgery service could be established and maintained.

"Sri Lanka has one of the better health systems in the developing world," Dr Ekanayake said. "The increase in the incidence of craniofacial anomalies is attributable to such factors as a declining infant mortality rate and greater awareness. Improvements in craniofacial trauma management have also led to increased demand for reconstructive procedures."

"While the structural requirements for craniofacial surgery exist in two centres, Sri Lanka has just six trained plastic surgeons to serve a population of 19 million. So it is human resources which are most critical at this point in time. We have our first craniofacial postgraduate trainee currently in training in Australia and we rely on the annual missions of Australian and New Zealand plastic surgeons. I felt it was timely therefore to conduct this feasibility study."

Dr Ekanayake's data collection included the identification of existing and future facilities and resources, and the matching of training needs to clinical workload. He also examined issues pertaining to legal responsibilities, training concerns, cultural factors and potential collaborative partners.

He concluded that while there was the potential for an advanced craniofacial surgery service in Sri Lanka, the country would still rely on one to two annual missions from overseas surgeons. The main collaborative group identified by Dr Ekanayake was Interplast Australia & New Zealand.

Interplast first visited Sri Lanka in 2002 and, with the support of the Colonial Foundation, has since sent 20 teams there. It has also assisted a number of Sri Lankan surgeons to attend Australian conferences.

Dr Ekanayake's presentation is one of hundreds at this year's ASC, covering all surgical specialties and aspects of surgical history and education. Nearly 2,000 delegates are expected to attend the ASC, which runs from 2 to 6 May and is being held at the Adelaide Convention Centre. The ASC program is available online at www.surgeons.org

Media inquiries: Michael Barrett, Media & PR Manager - 0429 028 933
Bridget Hooper, Media & PR Officer – 0437 008 891