



International Medical Health Organization (IMHO)

Issue: #14

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"Rebuilding Lives" in Sri Lanka: A Review of the 7th Annual Convention in Boston

The 7th Annual Convention of the International Medical Health Organization (IMHO) took place with great success on Friday, April 30th and Saturday, May 1st at the Hilton Hotel in Boston (Woburn). We were thrilled to have so many join us for this important gathering. At present, many of the health and medical needs of the IDPs, resettled IDPs, and those throughout the Northeast affected by the conflict have yet to be redressed. The most pressing current needs touch on issues of mental health, amputee rehabilitation, sanitation & clean water, health infrastructure development, microcredit/livelihoods support, and local personnel training & support. Our convention this year focused on two of the current areas of greatest need-mental health issues and comprehensive rehabilitation for war amputees. We were proud to have so many esteemed speakers share their insights, experiences, and knowledge with us, including those from backgrounds in health care, academic, and NGO/nonprofit work.

Activities began on Friday evening with the CME medical lectures, IMHO Youth Forum, and IMHO Women's Forum all conducting sessions that featured a number of speakers and general discussions. A dinner catered by Pongal Restaurant took place immediately after the activities. The medical lecture featured 4 prominent doctors: Dr. Ganesh Ravindran, who spoke on Code STEMI; Dr. N. Rajakumar, who spoke on Brain Abnormalities in Autism; Dr. Frederick Stoddard, Jr., who spoke on Disaster Psychiatry; and Dr. Nanda Nanthakumar, who spoke on Bacterial Colonization and Clinical Disease.

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who spoke on Brain Abnormalities in Autism; Dr. Frederick Stoddard, Jr., who spoke on Disaster Psychiatry; and Dr. Nanda Nanthakumar, who spoke on Bacterial Colonization and Clinical Disease.

The IMHO Women's Forum, which is designed to increase the participation of women in IMHO and provide an opportunity for issues related to women's health and well-being in Sri Lanka and elsewhere to be discussed, featured several speakers as well. Elizabeth Yost of PEER (Partnering for Economic Empowerment and Renewal) Servants (www.peerservants.org) talked about her organization and the work they've done with microfinance for women in Jaffna and other places around the world. Drs. Sujanthi Rajaram and Rajam Theventhiran, both members of the IMHO Board of Directors, also touched on microcredit efforts and the need for improved systems of care for orphans and other children who grow up in children's homes. Specific project ideas were floated at the meeting as well. There was a feeling of great motivation and a strong hope for collective action fostered during the gathering.

Also on Friday evening, the IMHO Youth Forum took place, with roughly 40 youth in attendance. The main speaker for the evening was Alex Theventhiran who recently returned from a 2-week trip to Jaffna where he volunteered at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. He had many interesting stories, photos, and insights to share, and helped to grow the interest in service within all the young people who attended. Greg Buie and Meera Pathmarajah, two Directors of Visions Global Empowerment (www.VisionsForTheFuture.org), an educational nonprofit that seeks to uplift youth through education also presented on the importance of service. Ideas for how to get young people more involved and what we can all do to help those in need in Sri Lanka, India, or elsewhere, were also discussed.

Saturday's activities were broken down into two sessions: morning and evening. In the morning we had roughly 125 people present and heard from some fantastic speakers. With this year's convention theme being "REBUILDING LIVES", we hoped to draw attention to the issues most affecting those in Sri Lanka trying to put the pieces of their lives together after so many years of conflict, displacement, poverty, and so much more. The two recurring themes speakers touched on were 1. the massive need for psychosocial care and 2. the overwhelming number of amputees and disabled persons requiring prostheses, physical rehabilitation, and long-term support.

The presentations on Saturday morning kicked off with Dr. Poologanathan, Board member of MIOT (www.miot.org.uk) and IMHO International Coordinator, along with Dr. Namasivayam, Director of Sivan Arul Illam Trust in the U.K., who provided an update on the efforts of MIOT and Sivan Arul Illam Trust in Sri Lanka and in general. A new promotional video for Sivan Arul Illam has been produced and can be viewed on YouTube here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ks-NdFrtXD4>

We then heard from Evelyn Cherow, Founder/CEO of GlobalPartnersUnited (www.global-partners-united.com), who touched on the possibilities of using information & communication technology (ICT) to the benefit of public health in the developing world by connecting experts and twinning centers of excellence in developing and developed countries. In this way, telehealth can be used for medical education, case referrals, trainings, and so much more. The possibilities for utilizing this in Sri Lanka are apparent with the massive need for more mental health and physical rehab experts to be trained.

In both the morning and evening sessions Dr. Sooriakumaran, who is a Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine & a Clinical Director at Queen May's Hospital in the U.K., shared his important work in providing prosthetics to patients in Mannar who were left disabled by the conflict. Long-term and regular care for these patients will be a major challenge, with so many thousands of amputees in need of such services. Providing prostheses and physical rehab to these patients can be an incredibly uplifting milestone on the road to overall recovery, and IMHO intends to continue to support such transformative efforts.

Joining us from Sri Lanka, Dr. Ganesan, Consultant Psychiatrist at the National Institute of Mental Health, further drove home the importance of mental health work in Sri Lanka and the opportunities & challenges we face in doing so. Dr. Ganesan has a vast array of experience working all across Sri Lanka and spoke in both the morning and the evening about the need to holistically and practically engage those affected by the conflict and displacement. Dr. Alan Krohn, Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan, presented along the same lines, outlining the challenges faced in doing mental health work, but emphasizing the overwhelming need to develop such services in Sri Lanka. Having made several trips to Sri Lanka and working with a number of local NGOs in various parts of the country, Dr. Krohn has seen the complexities of mental health issues in

Sri Lanka, and yet, like all of our speakers, remains committed to serving those in need in whatever capacity possible.

Prof. Adele Barker, who is a Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Arizona, offered her unique perspectives on Sri Lanka following a year spent there as a Fulbright Scholar back in 2001-2002. She then returned to Sri Lanka several times since then, traveling all across the island, and later authoring a novel on her experiences-[Not Quite Paradise: An American Sojourn in Sri Lanka](#). Her fresh take and descriptive insights on life and struggle in Sri Lanka elicited a whole host of feelings, the greatest of which was arguably nostalgia. She reminded us all of the richness and beauty of the island and its people: <http://www.theimho.org/publications/imho-in-the-news/293-lives-of-books>

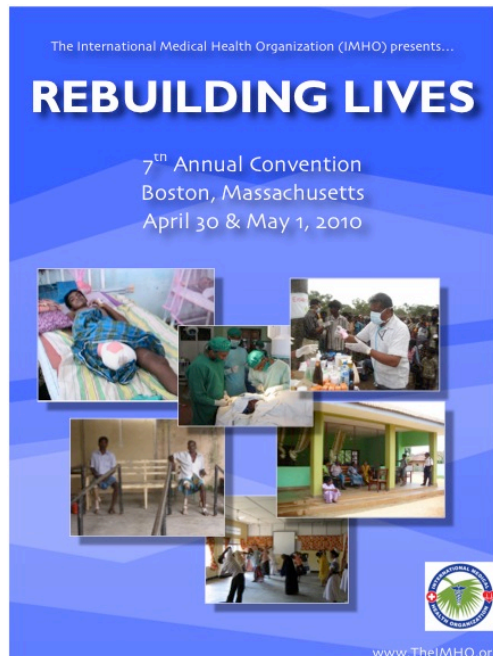
Our Chief Guest for the evening was the highly esteemed Dr. David Henderson, Director of the Global Health Program in Psychiatry at Partners Hospital in Massachusetts. Drawing upon his own experiences working in Rwanda and later in other countries, his talk focused on the need for global psychiatric help and highlighted many of the challenges faced in providing quality mental health care, especially in communities abroad that have been devastated by war, disaster, or other trauma.

Finally, we turned our attention to the work of IMHO over the past one year, during which time so much has changed in Sri Lanka. **Through it all, IMHO has been in the forefront in leading relief and development services in areas throughout the Northeast, and has been an important player in helping to save and improve countless lives.** Dr. Rajam Theventhiran, our IMHO Treasurer, gave an annual update of all our efforts and finances, a full report of which can be found on our website (<http://www.theimho.org/publications/newsletters/226-2009-annual-report>) or in our annual souvenir program. IMHO President Dr. Raguraj then spoke briefly about the way forward for IMHO in 2010-2011 as we continue to build our organization and better serve those in need in Sri Lanka and around the world. With IMHO joining InterAction in 2009 and becoming a registered USAID Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) in 2010, we believe we will continue to maximize our impact as an organization and help many, many more people in need globally.

The convention culminated with the annual Boston saree auction, which raised roughly \$28,000 alone. Two sarees and one painting were auctioned off in a rousing bidding war in which the Boston community (and several visiting friends) really rallied to help raise funds for the people in need in Sri Lanka. As always, it was a spirited and fun way to give back. A delicious dinner, again catered by Pongal Restaurant, finished the evening and the convention. Overall, it was a great success and an invaluable meeting.

View & Download the 2010 Annual Souvenir Program, All Convention Presentations, & the Event Photo Gallery

You can view and download our full **2010 ANNUAL CONVENTION SOUVENIR PROGRAM**, featuring articles from doctors and key partners in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, and Colombo, by clicking here: <http://www.theimho.org/publications/newsletters/294-souvenir-program-2010>. *For the full quality document, please use the 'Download' feature, as only the low resolution file is available in the "Preview".*



You can also view the **Photo Gallery** of the 7th Annual IMHO Convention here:
<http://www.theimho.org/field-news/picture-gallery>

Finally, you can also view and download **any of the presentations** from our Annual Convention by using the following links below:

Brain Abnormalities in Autism (*Dr. N. Rajakumar*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/291-brain-abnormalities-autism>

Bacterial Colonization and Clinical Disease (*Dr. N. Nanthakumar*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/292-cme-bacterial-colonization>

Empowering Widows through Microfinance (*Elizabeth Yost*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/284-empowering-widows-micro>

IMHO Youth Forum: The Importance of Service (*Greg Buie & Meera Pathmarajah*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/279-youth-forum-service>

Report on MIOT Projects in Sri Lanka and Moving Forward (*Dr. Poologanathan*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/288-miot-report>

E-Health: Telehealth, Telerehab, & Harnessing ICT for Health Services Development (*Evelyn Cherov*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/280-ehealth-telerehab-gpu>

Mental Health Services in Sri Lanka: Past Experiences (*Dr. Alan Krohn*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/285-mental-health-past-experiences>

Mental Health Needs in Vanni (*Dr. M. Ganesan*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/281-mental-health-vanni>

Mental Health in Post-War Northern Sri Lanka (*Dr. M. Ganesan*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/282-mental-health-in-post-war-northern-sri-lanka>

Need for Global Psychiatric Help (*Dr. David Henderson*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/283-global-psychiatric-help>

Update on IMHO Efforts and Progress: 2009-2010 (*Dr. Rajam Theventhiran*):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/287-update-2009-10>

Moving Forward: IMHO in 2010 and Beyond (Dr. S. Raguraj):
<http://www.theimho.org/publications/presentations/286-moving-forward-2010>

Child Nutrition Program

IMHO's efforts to support child nutrition continue, with 80 children at Anchali akam in Point Pedro, which is under the direction of Rev. Father Deamian, receiving regular cow's milk.



Upcoming IMHO Events

Nalam Kaappom 2010: Toronto (IMHO Canada)

WHEN: Saturday, June 5, 2010 from 4:00-8:00pm and Sunday, June 6, 2010 from 12:00-6:00pm

WHERE: Canada Sri Ayyappan Temple, 635 Middlefield Road, Scarborough, ON M1V 5B8

WHY: The people of NE Sri Lanka need our help! The most pressing needs are for prosthetic limbs, mental illness & psychosocial issues, ongoing primary care services, sanitation (including toilets), and assistance for the Jaffna and Batticaloa Hospitals.

HOW: You can make a donation to IMHO Canada by check/cash, PayPal, or direct debit (www.IMHOCanada.org). Or become a monthly sponsor for just \$10/month!

CONTACT: contact@imhocanada.org; 416.321.9555

Nalam Kaappom 2010: Ottawa (IMHO Canada)

WHEN: Saturday, May 29th from 3:00-6:00pm

WHERE: Walter Baker Sports Centre, 100 Malvern Dr. (Room #202), Nepean K2J 2G5

HOW: You can make a donation to IMHO Canada by check/cash, PayPal, or direct debit (www.IMHOCanada.org). Or become a monthly sponsor for just \$10/month!

CONTACT: wbsc@ottawa.ca; 613.580.2788

Nalam Kaappom 2010: Montreal (IMHO Canada)

WHEN: Sunday, May 30, 2010 from 10:00am-12:00pm

WHERE: Ganesha Palace, 300 Marcel Laurin, St. Laurent, Quebec

HOW: You can make a donation to IMHO Canada by check/cash, PayPal, or direct debit (www.IMHOCanada.org). Or become a monthly sponsor for just \$10/month!

CONTACT: 514.816.0923; contact@imhocanada.org

Please join IMHO Canada for this annual event to learn about the most current and pressing needs of the people in Sri Lanka, including firsthand accounts from four visiting physicians from Jaffna, Kalmunai, Valaichchenai, and Vavuniya, and updates from IMHO Canada on efforts thus far. This

Kalmunai, Valaichchenai, and Vavuniya, and updates from IMHO Canada on efforts thus far. This event is also the annual fundraising event for IMHO Canada, so please come out and show your support, and make a donation to the important work we do to help those in great need in Sri Lanka! Admission is FREE! Link to event listing on IMHO Canada site:
<http://www.imhocanada.org/events/upcoming-events>

*****SAVE THE DATE: April 30, 2011
8th Annual IMHO Convention in Houston, Texas*****

**Be the
Difference.
Save a Life
with just
\$10/month.
DONATE
TODAY!**

During this crucial time in Sri Lanka and around the world, as we face monumental challenges in providing better access to quality medical and health care for those most at-risk populations, we need YOUR HELP now more than ever. With **just \$10/month** you can help save and improve lives in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Please consider making a donation to IMHO today. You can **donate online via PayPal as a one-time or recurring donation** (the amount & frequency of which are up to you).

You can also **donate via mail** by sending a check made out to "IMHO" to the following address:

**IMHO Treasurer
PO Box 61265
Staten Island, New York 10306
United States**

All donations are tax-deductible (tax ID code #59-3779465)

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