

## About the SLMA Expert Committee on Snakebite

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### The Beginning

The Council of the Sri Lanka Medical Association established the Expert Committee on Snakebite in 1983 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Dennis Aloysius. This was the first SLMA Expert Committee appointed; it has remained intact over the years and continues to function to this day, responding to issues regarding the management of snakebite in the country. Membership in the SBC is open to all registered medical practitioners, and selected non-medical persons, interested in the topic or with specialized herpetological knowledge; its composition has seen many changes over the years and now includes many active snakebite researchers.

Dr. Aloysius, a leading Family Physician at that time, made the Council aware of the high incidence of deaths from snakebite, paucity of knowledge amongst members of the medical profession regarding snakebite and its management and the preference of victims to opt for treatment from traditional practitioners. The principal aim of the committee at its inception was to collect what information was available at the time regarding snakes, their bites, envenoming and the management of victims, and to make that information available to the medical profession. The scope of the Committee expanded over the years and, in 2011, its Aims & Objectives were defined as set out below.

### Aims & Objectives

1. Advise the SLMA Council on all matters relating to issues in connection with snakebite in Sri Lanka.
2. Be available to advise the Ministry of Health and other Government bodies on all matters relating to issues in connection with snakebite in Sri Lanka.
3. Play proactive roles in the prevention of snakebite and the promotion of best practices in the management of snakebite by venomous snakes through:
  - a. lectures and seminars at SLMA clinical and scientific meetings;
  - b. outreach programmes for doctors and other health delivery staff in provincial institutions;
  - c. radio and television programmes for the general public;
  - d. talks and publications for the general public; and
  - e. publications, including management guidelines, for medical practitioners.
4. Promote, encourage and facilitate development of effective snake antivenom for use in Sri Lanka.
5. Promote, encourage and facilitate collection of accurate data regarding snakebite and snakebite deaths.
6. Any other activities including partnering civil society organizations that may be necessary to achieve the general objectives 1 to 5.