

Graduate Profile



Druvindra Atapattu, MD

Class of 1995

Sri Lanka

Dr. Druvindra Atapattu is devoted to his native land of Sri Lanka, following in his father's footsteps as he cares for the people to whom he is most connected. As an only child, he was influenced by his physician father who served as the Minister of Health in Sri Lanka and played an influential role at UNICEF in New York. It seemed his fate to practice medicine and assist the country he has always called home.

In the late 1980s, in the midst of an ongoing ethnic conflict, the North Colombo Medical College, the first private medical college in the country, was closed due to student unrest. At the time, the senior Dr. Atapattu was traveling extensively with UNICEF and became aware of St. George's University School of Medicine.

SGU worked closely with Sri Lankan government representatives and its own Academic Board to craft a unique entry and scholarship program that allowed many of the displaced medical students to continue their studies. As a result, nearly 300 future doctors eagerly accepted SGU's generous agreement with Sri Lanka and transferred to the University.

In 1990, Druvindra Atapattu arrived in Grenada to begin his studies. Although he was in the presence of so many students from Sri Lanka, he was excited about the diversity of the student body at SGU. "The opportunity to meet students from other parts of the globe was tremendous," he said. In fact, most of his friends from SGU, including his roommate, were Americans. Dr. Atapattu was also impressed with the caliber of full-time professors at SGU, and the many visiting professors from the UK and US with whom he studied.

Knowing he would ultimately return to Sri Lanka, Dr. Atapattu selected the UK for his clinical years, stating that "the British medical system is most similar to that in Sri Lanka."

Dr. Atapattu has been a physician for four years in the Accident and Emergency Unit at The National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), the premiere teaching hospital and tertiary facility in the country. Positions at the NHSL are coveted and highly competitive, as it is the largest government hospital in Sri Lanka and is well-equipped for all medical specialties.

Prior to this position, Dr. Atapattu performed mandatory out-station service in a hospital in Polonnaruwa, a city well-known for its ancient ruins. There he received critical hands-on training, caring for the countless casualties of war from this conflicted region. It was during this time - "in the deep end" as he refers to it - that he was inspired to specialize in emergency medicine and prepare for a career in surgery.

In 2004, he had the opportunity to put his skills to practice. He joined the accident service in Colombo, the business hub of Sri Lanka and his place of residence, where he was directly involved with treating in excess of 500 victims from the Tsunami. Dr. Atapattu explained: "It was a chaotic time following the devastation, with many practical problems involving the distribution of supplies. While the area received an abundance of donations in good faith, there was little organization." Dr. Atapattu was part of a team of doctors recruited to organize and distribute medications, medical equipment and care to several inland refugee camps. He is pleased to say that upon recent visits to his hometown in the affected sea belt, the area has been remarkably restored.

Dr. Atapattu is extremely busy, as he spends hours in the hospital, three to four evenings a week seeing patients in his private practice, and two days a week as the company doctor for Shell, a global group of energy and petrochemical companies. In addition, Dr. Atapattu and his wife, also a physician at the NHSL, are busy raising two year-old twins.

This husband and wife team maintains a tireless schedule. Voluntarily postponing a family due to their strenuous career schedules, they have now developed an efficient, albeit challenging, system that allows one parent to be at home with the children while the other is at work. In his limited spare time, Dr. Atapattu interviews students in the region who are interested in attending St. George's University. He is happy to assist these young men and women, offering his insight into the quality education and international environment of the University.



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