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FACULTY OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA

Cover image captured at Akkarayan - Union Kulam

Message from the Coordinator for Strategic Planning



I am delighted by the progress of the Centre for Digital Epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Established with the support of dedicated individuals and the Jaffna Medical Faculty Overseas Alumni USA, the Centre has advanced its mission of generating locally relevant knowledge and conducting high-quality research that benefits our communities. The achievements in research and capacity building reflect the commitment of our team and international partners.

As the Centre continues to grow, we remain focused on strengthening organizational capacity and strategic development. With the guidance of our advisory panel, alumni, and well-wishers, I am confident we will achieve new milestones. I extend my warm wishes to all colleagues, partners, and supporters for a successful and collaborative year ahead.

Prof.R.Surenthirakumaran
Dean, Faculty of Medicine,
Coordinator for Strategic Planning
Centre for Digital Epidemiology

Message from the Coordinator for Clinical Research & Operations



Sri Lanka, as a country with poor resource setting, faces significant challenges in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) due to limited resources and infrastructure. To overcome these, we have adopted an integrated approach that combines research, service delivery, and capacity building. Through the Centre of Digital Epidemiology (CoDE), we are advancing digital transformation, focusing on secure and accessible data management, and developing an AI-driven decision support system to enhance precision in healthcare decisions. Our work emphasizes collaboration at both local and global levels, involving multidisciplinary teams, empowering community and participatory action research to address various health challenges, from nutrition to mental health, in support of UHC.

Prof.S.Kumaran
Coordinator for Clinical Research & Operations
Centre for Digital Epidemiology,
Faculty of Medicine

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Eye Health Care projects	1
Under 5 Children Nutrition Intervention Programme - Amuthasurabi Project	1
DIGIPATHS Project	2
Critical Care in Asia & Africa (CCAA Project)	2
Global Health Research Group on Violence Against Women & Girls(VAWG)	3
Rural Health Development Projects	3
Women Need Assessment Project - Jaffna	4
Developing Social Welfare Policy for Northern Province	4
Global Health Diasporas Project	4
WASPAR	5

2

EVENTS

5

3

COLLABORATORS

6

EYE HEALTH CARE PROJECTS

Cataract Surgery Research Reaches International Stage

An abstract from the Eye Unit, Teaching Hospital Jaffna has been accepted at the 44th Congress of the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons in London — placing Northern Sri Lanka's surgical innovation on the global map.

The abstract, titled "Turning the Tide on Cataract Blindness: Transforming to a High-Volume Surgical Unit as a Pragmatic Approach to Minimize Cataract Surgery Waiting Times in Resource-Limited Settings," represents a culmination of years of surgical innovation and service transformation at the Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

The milestone arrives alongside a peer-reviewed publication: Muthusamy, M., Subaschandren, K., and co-authors published Visual Outcomes of Cataract Surgery at a Tertiary Care Hospital in Northern Sri Lanka in Cureus (18:3, e105962) in early 2026.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATION:

Muthusamy et al. (2026). Visual Outcomes of Cataract Surgery at a Tertiary Care Hospital in Northern Sri Lanka. Cureus, 18(3), e105962.

<https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.105962>

ONGOING EYE HEALTH STUDIES

- **Hypertension Screening**
Opportunistic screening among eye clinic patients revised proposal v3.0 submitted to ERC; approval awaited.
- **Catquest-9SF Tamil Validation**
Translation and validation of patient-reported outcome questionnaire submitted to ERC.
- **Cataract Patient Outcomes**
Study evaluating patient-reported outcomes post-cataract surgery submitted for ERC review.

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

- **Refractive Errors in School Children**
Patterns and associated factors, ages 6–18, Teaching Hospital Jaffna — prospective hospital-based study.
- **Refractive Outcomes of Cataract Surgery**
Refractive outcomes of phacoemulsification at a tertiary hospital in Northern Sri Lanka.



UNDER 5 CHILDREN NUTRITION INTERVENTION PROGRAMME — AMUTHASURABI PROJECT

Amuthasurabi Marks Three Key Evaluation Milestones

Biweekly home visits and community monitoring progress in the Poonakary MOH area as the project completes its 3rd, 6th, and 9th-month assessments.

The pilot quasi-experimental study tracks child anthropometric measurements, the Household Hunger Scale, and the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale across participating families. A complementary qualitative study engaged 22 purposively selected caregivers, surfacing firsthand perspectives on household challenges, cultural practices, and barriers to implementation.



The project received a significant platform at the Lady Leelawathy Ramanathan Memorial Lecture 2026 at the University of Jaffna, where Prof. Gitanjali Sathiadas, Chair Professor of Pediatrics, anchored the project's achievements within the region's wider pediatric care framework.



DIGIPATHS — DIGITALLY INTEGRATED CARE PATHWAYS FOR MULTIPLE LONG-TERM CONDITIONS

The DIGIPATHS (Digitally Integrated Care Pathways for Multiple Long-Term Conditions Management in Primary Care, Sri Lanka) project aims to strengthen the management of multiple long-term conditions (MLTCs) through the development and implementation of digitally integrated care pathways within the primary healthcare system. The project integrates electronic health records (OpenMRS), clinical decision support tools, automated feedback systems, and patient-facing digital applications to support coordinated, evidence-based care.

During the reporting period, substantial progress was achieved across multiple work packages. Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) activities were expanded across the Northern, Eastern, Central, and Western Provinces, accompanied by stakeholder consultations, community outreach programmes, and capacity-building initiatives. Rapid evaluations of existing primary care pathways were completed in selected provinces, with data analysis currently in progress. Stakeholder workshops and Nominal Group Technique sessions were conducted to identify and prioritize recommendations for improving chronic disease management.



Workshop on CEI



*Inauguration of
Centre for Excellence
in Community
Engagement and
Involvement and
Health System
Research*

Regulatory milestones included completion of the ISRCTN registration and ongoing registration with the Sri Lanka Clinical Trials Registry. In addition, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes were delivered to enhance healthcare professionals' competencies in managing MLTCs and diabetic kidney disease in primary care.

These achievements represent important milestones towards establishing a digitally enabled, integrated model of care that has the potential to improve care coordination, strengthen primary healthcare services, and enhance health outcomes for individuals living with multiple long-term conditions in Sri Lanka.

Critical Care Asia & Africa- CCAA

CCAA Fellows Enter Final Year of Doctoral Study!

The Collaboration for Research, Implementation and Training in Critical Care in Asia and Africa (CCAA), led by the Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford, UK, supports two doctoral research fellows based at the University of Birmingham are entering their final year.

Work Package 1

- A manuscript on prevalence and risk factors nearing submission
- Systematic review of AF screening diagnostic accuracy ongoing.

Work Package 2

- Cascade of care analysis for hypertension being prepared for the Journal of Clinical Hypertension
- Data Collection for care pathway rapid evaluation completed across primary, secondary & tertiary facilities in Northern Province.

NIHR Global Health Research Group on Violence Against Women & Girls

"Cabinet approval of the international collaboration agreement formally enables the University of Jaffna to participate in a global research programme led by the University of Birmingham."

The NIHR Global Health Research Group on Violence Against Women and Girls is an international collaborative research programme led by the University of Birmingham in partnership with the University of Jaffna, the University of Cape Town, the Lancet Commission, and other global collaborators across South Africa, India, Mexico, Brazil, and Sri Lanka. The programme aims to generate evidence on the health, social, and economic impacts of violence against women and girls (VAW/G), while strengthening survivor-centred research, community engagement, and evidence-based interventions in low- and middle-income countries.

During the reporting period, significant progress was achieved across multiple work packages. Ethical

approval was obtained for the establishment of survivor panels in Sri Lanka, with preparatory activities underway across the Northern, Central, and Western Provinces. National consultations with multidisciplinary experts supported the refinement of study tools for assessing the healthcare burden of VAW/G, while methodological planning commenced to evaluate its economic and societal impacts.



Rural Health Development Projects(RHD)

Two initiatives aim to strengthen primary healthcare in underserved regions by training and deploying Community Health Workers (CHWs) to support Public Health Midwives (PHMs):

Northern Province

The RHD Project for Northern Province, which began on 1 July 2025, currently has one coordinator and 22 CHWs actively working across Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, and Mullaitivu. Each CHW is assigned to a Public Health Midwife, supporting household surveys, fertility services, school health programmes, medical camps, elderly care, and Mothers' Support Group activities — including income-generation initiatives that strengthen community resilience beyond healthcare.



Batticaloa (Eastern Province)

In Batticaloa, the "Bridging the Gaps in Primary Care" project has been running since 17 January 2025, with four active CHWs providing targeted primary care support in the Eastern Province.

RURAL HEALTH PROJECT — KEY ACTIVITIES

- Household surveys & fertility services
- School health programmes
- Medical camps
- Elderly care
- Mothers' Support Group facilitation
- Flood relief contributions
- Income-generation activities

Community Health and Well-being Needs Assessment among reproductive age women in selected MOH areas in Jaffna.

The Community Health and Well-being Needs Assessment Among Women of Reproductive Age in Jaffna is an ongoing collaborative research initiative conducted by the Centre for Digital Epidemiology (CoDE), Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, under the Global Innovation Fund.

The study seeks to generate community-based evidence on maternal and reproductive health, menstrual health, and mental health among women of reproductive age to support the development of evidence-informed health programmes and policies in Northern Sri Lanka.

FOCUS AREAS

- Maternal & reproductive health
- Menstrual health needs
- Mental health challenges



Global Health Diasporas Project

The Global Health Diasporas Project, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and implemented in partnership with Hochschule Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany, investigates the role of diaspora physicians and health professionals in strengthening healthcare delivery for ethnic minority and underserved populations in Colombia, Ghana, and Sri Lanka. The project explores the contributions of transnational engagement, return migration, and knowledge transfer to improve health systems and promote equitable access to healthcare.

During the reporting period, the project continued to strengthen research capacity through advanced academic training. Two PhD fellows and one Postdoctoral fellow are actively engaged in the project.

Developing Social Welfare Policy for Northern Province

In collaboration with the Department of Social Services, Northern Province, and funded by The Asia Foundation, the University of Jaffna has completed district-level stakeholder consultation meetings across all five districts of the Northern Province.

Building upon the data gathered through District-Level Consultations and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), the formulation of Policy Draft 1 is currently set to commence as the next phase.

Key Focus Areas:

- Social welfare challenges for older persons, persons with disabilities, women-headed households, children with special educational needs, and rehabilitated persons
- Existing policy gaps and service delivery challenges in Sri Lanka's current social welfare framework
- Evidence-based recommendations for a comprehensive, sustainable Social Welfare Policy for the Northern Province



WATER SECURITY IN NORTHERN PROVINCE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (WASPAR)

During the first quarter of 2026, WASPAR implemented several initiatives to strengthen water governance, research, and public awareness in the Jaffna Peninsula.

A series of four workshops were conducted for elected Members of four Local Government Authorities in the Valikamam region of the Jaffna Peninsula, covering the Valukkai Aru watershed. A 25-member Working Group was constituted across the four Pradeshiya Sabhas to promote Collaborative Learning and Co-ordinated Actions for Water Governance.

An awareness campaign was conducted through an exhibition under the Clean Sri Lanka Model Village Program to highlight the protection of local water resources and sand wells.



World Water Day was celebrated through school awareness programs, a special publication of the Thuli edition, student engagement activities, and a Young Water Professionals seminar.

A water awareness program was conducted for staff of the Nallur Divisional Secretariat, focusing on regional water security challenges and groundwater conservation. Studies on Water Scarcity in Jaffna were launched in Poompuhar, Araly, and Changanai.

YWP continued its Thematic Talks on Water and Society, focusing on Engaging Community for Social Change and Sustainability, Water Bankruptcy, Urban Water Governance and Thinking, Masculinities and Engineering in Water Projects.

Events

CEI Meeting

24 May 2026, Galle Face Hotel

"Co-designing the Future of Digital Primary Care" brought together community representatives, researchers, and healthcare professionals under the DIGIPATHS programme. Highlights included a presentation of the proposed EHR system with decision support (Dr. W. W. Supun), group discussions on community expectations, and an operational plan presentation by Miss S. Tamilselvi.



Workshop on Narrative Writing Skills

27 May 2026, UoJ

"The Power of Narrative Writing" workshop was facilitated by Dr. Shane Halpe (Lecturer, Family Medicine, University of Moratuwa) as part of DIGIPATHS capacity building. Participants explored how narrative writing enhances patient-centred care, reflective practice, and research communication.



Our Collaborators

Regional

- Faculty of Medicine
DCFM
Department of Paediatrics
Department of Surgery
Department of Psychiatry
Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology
- NGOs – CANE, JMA
- Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CoDL)
- Ministry of Health, Northern Province
- Teaching Hospital Jaffna
Women's Health Centre
Teaching Hospital Development Forum
Day Surgical Unit

National

- Eastern University of Sri Lanka
- University of Kelaniya
- University of Colombo
- Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
- Asia Foundation
- Institute of Health Policy
- Christian Blind Mission
- Seva Lanka
- Nippon Foundation

International

- National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), UK
- University of Birmingham, UK
- University of Oxford, UK
- Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada
- Duke University, USA
- University of Manchester, UK
- University of Applied Sciences, Fulda , Germany
- University of Sumatra Utara
- University of Saskatchewan, Canada
- Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India
- University of Malaya, Malaysia
- NGOs – International Medical Health Organisation
- IIMHR- Jaipur
- IIMHR- New Delhi
- Banyan Acadmy Chennai India
- Public Health Foundation of India

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Photo captured at Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."
— Robert Collier —



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