

## MY EXPERIENCE AT IFCC GENERAL CONFERENCE IN MADRID

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When I joined to the medical laboratory profession as a Biochemist, I barely knew anything about the IFCC. However during my short carrier I came to know IFCC is not only an international organization but also it is the heart of the clinical laboratory profession, which is working for the better health & laboratory medicine worldwide. Therefore, I was dreaming to find an opportunity to participate any IFCC international event. Finally, I was fortunate enough to be at Madrid as the Sri Lankan representative among the most of genius in the clinical laboratory sector & IVD industry worldwide.

IFCC general conference at Madrid was an unforgettable experience in my life in many ways. I have been searching knowledge & new experience in clinical laboratory field that are not freely available in the developing countries such as Sri Lanka. Therefore, an opportunity such as this is a great occasion for us to catch many positive things from the international forum. It was great pleasure to be a participant in such a big international event where eminent scientists & clinicians from different part of the world get together to share their experience & view on various important aspects of the clinical laboratory sector. The lectures were very informatics, timely, scientific ones & afterthoughts from the experts made it more meaningful. I had the opportunity and honor to meet several members of the executive board of the IFCC, as well as other expertise who were humble enough to give many ideas and advices, which were very useful for my association and me. It made me realizes that I have left many more things to learn and explore for the better future of the clinical laboratory sector in my country. It is glad to say that the support from the IFCC & the members for the future activities of ours were well assured at the conference.

Despite categorized as a developing country we have a very good free health service in Sri Lanka. Our medical laboratory sector has been well organized & immensely contributed to make the people's health better. All the members of the Association of Clinical Biochemistry in Sri Lanka (ACBSL) are playing leading role in the sector, performing well with limited resources for making the service better. However, there are some areas where more attention is still required to achieve the level of international standards. One significant area is laboratory accreditation in which many laboratories are working towards their goals but found it difficult with limited resources. I realized at the conference ACBSL is the ideal organization in the country, which has

the capacity & capability in providing support with the guidance of the IFCC for those working towards laboratory accreditation with international standards. At the General Conference I was really interested in the effort done by the IFCC to standardization & harmonization of many laboratory tests. After my visit on behalf of the ACBSL, I have been able to communicate with Professor Linda, C-STFT Chair for getting more information about the project & currently ACBSL is an actively participant in this international effort.

The ACBSL is fortunate enough to have many motivated young laboratory scientist who are engaging researches on different interesting topics at the moment. Since the numbers of laboratory experts in the country who are really interested in research are limited, young scientists are found it difficult to get expertise advice which causes negative impact on the laboratory development in the country. During my visit, I realized that the IFCC has many experts in different specialty who are willing to support for budding researchers at any time. After having a discussion with many of the young scientist in our Association, I was able to share my experience in Madrid. They were quite happy to hear this & now keen to communicate with the foreign experts for getting better advices.

At the meeting, many speakers emphasized that the relationship between laboratories & clinicians should be very significant to optimize the clinical effectiveness of laboratory investigations. Although the requirement was well identified by ACBSL few years back, in spite of having occasional discussions at different forums we haven't been able to developed a strong relationship with the clinicians. Since the topic was raised at the general meeting, the importance of taking initiative actions has been well realized by the association at the moment. Immediate actions will be taken in near future to strengthen the bond between two sides.

The talk on increasing clinical effectiveness & high percentage of 'unnecessary' results delivered by Graham Beastall, IFCC past president was very practical & many laboratory experts in our association have now realized the important of this aspect & taking initiatives to address this matter. Apart from the recent initiatives I was able to draw the attention on the currently burden issues such as new challenges & threats facing by the laboratory sector, biological variations, practical use of high-sensitivity cardiac markers & cost effective medical testing. For me, the conference is an eye opener for many national organizations including ACBSL to realize the current threats, opportunities & future directions in the rapidly advancing laboratory field. I strongly feel my attendance at the IFCC general meeting would have a positive impact on the ACBSL in many ways & ultimately the medical laboratory sector in the country gets benefits.

Finally, I would like to thank IFCC president; past president & organizing committee for giving me this vital opportunity with the intention of uplifting the standards of medical laboratories in Sri Lanka. I also thank for all the experts, resource persons and the participants for their contribution to make this event a very successful one.



**Lakminda Thilakarathna with Tomris Ozben, IFCC Treasurer**



**Lakminda Thilakarathna at the IFCC GC**



**Lakminda Thilakarathna with new acquaintances**