

## Letter to the Editor

Apartado-aereo 1708

Cali-Colombia

August 25, 1964

Sir,

I wish to put forward for discussion the hypo-iodic basis of leprosy. Incidentally I have records of the use of a thyroid-depressant drug, Tapazole or Methimazole, in the therapy of more than 100 leprosy patients, and at present am studying them from the point of view of high dosage, and hope to report this soon in detail. In the meantime, it suffices to say that lepromatous patients have an exceptionally good tolerance for very high doses of Tapazole.

With regard to the wider question of epidemiology, I have inquired of S. G. BROWNE of Uzuakoli, E. Nigeria, with wide experience of leprosy in the Congo, and of GLYN GRIFFITHS of N. Rhodesia, and their kind replies have been on the same lines. I quote here the remarks of S. G. BROWNE: 'With regard to your thesis that the incidence of leprosy tends to be low in goitrous districts, the facts are quite against it in Congo. There was no adverse relation between goitre and leprosy. The gross figures for incidence in such districts, and the individual patients with both diseases, give no support whatever for your ideas. The populations concerned are Hamite as well as Bantu, lived on varied diets, mainly millet, or mainly maize, with cassava and plantain as their source of carbohydrate. They are facultative vegetarians as well as meat-eaters.'

'There are other foci of goitre in the ex-Belgian Congo, but in each of these the incidence of leprosy is lower than in the Wamba-Pawa district first mentioned. In these districts also the incidence of goitre would seem to have no bearing on the incidence of leprosy and *vice versa*.'

While having every respect for this opinion and for the work of BROWNE and GRIFFITHS, I feel that reports from other epidemiological areas are needed to fill out the picture, such as in marine areas and in hypo-iodic areas such as the mountain location of the new leprosy centre contemplated in India by Japan. I also feel that direct evidence should be obtained of the iodine status in water, soil, and air of important areas in Africa such as of great lakes and rivers, as well as marine areas.

I should be grateful if leprologists everywhere would write in to the Editor of *Leprosy Review*, to DR. ROBERT COCHRANE, London, or to me concerning facts and figures and opinions.

ARTHUR O'BYRNE