

Letter to the Editor

was most interested in Professor Vella's letter (*Lepr. Rev.* 1972, 42, 252) in which he states his opinion about the stigma of the word "leprosy" and his preference for the substitute "Hansenosis". Coming from England, where that stigma is not a cause for personal, social, or preventive problems—so serious in Brazil and other endemic countries of the Romance languages—our hopes of international co-operation are thus strengthened.

In Portuguese, the substitute "hansenias" (as in "elephantiasis", "psoriasis") is more euphonic and was preferred by a large majority of fellow-workers and patients consulted before our first terminological changes; translated as "hanseniosis", it was also accepted by most foreign specialists who honoured us with their responses to our questionnaire (*Derm. Int.*, 1969, 8, 40) and seems to be no more difficult to pronounce than "schistosomiasis", etc. Admittedly, it has the lexicographic defects so clearly pointed out by Professor Vella, but these are apparently less important in Brazil, where both forms "leishmaniasis" and "leishmaniose", "esquistossomiasis" and "esquistossomose", etc. are used indifferently, and where our hearing is accustomed to the admitted forms "meningococcia", "estreptococcia", "estafilococcia", etc.

However, quite a few correspondents here and abroad have also manifested their preference for "hansenose" ("hansenosis") and this was the form suggested to the Ministry of Health of Peru by a national seminar held there in 1971.

I can speak only for myself, but I believe that most of the 33 Brazilian medical schools and the 4 State public secretariats, as well as most of the authors who have already changed to "hansenias", would welcome an international agreement around "hansenosis", "Hansen's disease" or any non-eponymic appellation. Our main common objective is to free medical terminology from a stigmatizing pejorative term which has been definitely blocking any and all attempts at public enlightenment and causing immense personal and social suffering—much more than the disease itself—to millions in our area, i.e. our patients and their most unfortunate families.

A. ROTBERG

Instituto de Saude-Division Hansenologia, C.P. 8027. 01000 S. Paulo, SP Brazil