

News and Notes

REHABILITATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The 4th International Symposium on the Rôle of Public Relations in Rehabilitation was held in Athens from 10 to 16 May, 1975 under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences and the Ministry of Social Services.

A message of greeting from the International Leprosy Association was read at the inaugural session.

Although most of the participants were from the affluent countries of Europe and North America, and although the Symposium was mainly concerned with the diseases and conditions common in the Western world, two leprosy workers directed their attention to the needs of a special class of underprivileged persons needing rehabilitation. Dr S. G. Browne (a member of the Executive Committee of the International Society) gave a stimulating paper on "Relations with Inpatients and Outpatients with Special Reference to Leprosy Sufferers", and Dr A. J. Salvapandian, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, spoke on "Public Relations in Leprosy Rehabilitation".

The facts about leprosy and the need for local knowledge of the sufferer and the community were stressed by both speakers, and these ideas – novel in such a gathering – were welcomed and appreciated.

LEPROSY IN GREECE

During the above Symposium, Dr Browne was able to make fruitful contact with the Minister of Social Services and Health, and his officials, discussing with them the outmoded law requiring compulsory and virtually lifelong isolation of all persons in Greece diagnosed as having leprosy. At present, 380 leprosy sufferers are confined to the Santa Barbara Leprosy Hospital, but moves are afoot to amend or abrogate the law. The main obstacle to progress along these lines is the prejudice of ordinary people, and the misconceptions about leprosy that are widely current. In two television programmes, Dr Browne attempted to dispel some of these misconceptions by substituting modern ideas about leprosy and its control. He said that isolation as practised was inhuman, expensive, unnecessary and ineffective.

AFRICAN JOURNEYS

Dr S. G. Browne has recently made two journeys to Africa in the interests of leprosy sufferers. The first took him to Libya, where he advised the Government on the leprosy problem in the country, and to Cairo, where he took part, with Professor R. Van Breuseghem (of Antwerp) in a Symposium on Leprosy and Mycotic Diseases.

The second journey, sponsored by The Leprosy Mission as an initiatory phase of part of its Centenary outreach, was to Zaïre, and was particularly directed to conducting seminars for leprosy workers. With Dr J. Cap (now of ALERT, Addis Ababa) and Professor H. Périer (Adviser to the Zaïre Ministry of Health on Transmissible Diseases), Dr Browne was asked to draw up an advisory document on leprosy control in Zaïre. There may now be close on half a million cases of leprosy in Zaïre, in a population approaching 25 million people. Two Belgian voluntary bodies – *Foperda* and *Les Amis du Père Damien* – sponsored the attendance of several participants at these two seminars.

XV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF DERMATOLOGY

The XV International Congress of Dermatology will take place in Mexico City from 10 to 22 October, 1977, under the auspices of the International Committee of Dermatology of the International League of Dermatological Societies. The Honorary President of the Congress will be Professor Fernando Latapi.

A very full programme of Symposia, Lectures, Patient Presentations, Workshops, etc., is being arranged. Leprosy will be among the main subjects selected for the symposia.

The Secretary-General of the Congress will be:

Professor Felix Sagher,
Department of Dermatology,
Hadassah University Hospital,
P.O. Box 499,
91 000 Jerusalem, Israel,

to whom all enquiries should be sent.

In the large auditorium, simultaneous translation will be available in English, French, German and Spanish. Abstracts (200 words, in English only) are to be submitted by 1 January, 1977.

SEMINAR IN GUYANA: APRIL 4-6, 1975

“LEPROSY IN COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE”

The Medical Research Council of Guyana recently organized an intensive three-day seminar on leprosy, which was held in the University in Georgetown and attended by over 200 medical and paramedical workers. The guest lecturers were Dr O. W. Hasselblad of American Leprosy Missions, U.S.A., Dr M. L. Brubaker of the Pan-American Health Organisation (W.H.O.) and Dr A. C. McDougall, British Leprosy Relief Association, U.K. In company with the Government Leprologist, Dr Patricia Rose, the lecturers had numerous preliminary meetings with Ministry of Health and University officials, and before the opening of the Seminar the new LEPRA film was shown on three separate occasions and enthusiastically received by lay and medical audiences. The Seminar opened with a lecture and discussion on “Basic Definitions and Concepts of Leprosy,” followed by “Leprosy in the Americas,” “Early Signs and Symptoms,” “Immunology and Complications,” “Comparative Histopathology of Granulomatous Lesions” (Dr E. Simon, Pathologist, Georgetown Hospital), “Epidemiology and Control” (Dr Patricia Rose), “Causes of Physical Disabilities,” “Problems and Prospects in Leprosy Research,” “Psychosocial Aspects of Leprosy,” “The Leprosarium in the Changing Pattern of the Management and

Control of Leprosy” and “Symptom Patterns of Clinical Leprosy in Guyana” (Dr Patricia Rose).

During the past three years admissions to Mahaica Leprosarium have fallen virtually to zero, and this institution is now largely concerned with the care of patients who are aged, blind, institutionalised or in advanced stages of physical deformity. Nearly 800 out-patients have been registered by Dr Patricia Rose and her team, and initial diagnosis, treatment and supervision are now established in the more densely populated areas on an entirely out-patient basis.

The figures for leprosy in Guyana and the available resources are such that the disease could be reduced to very low levels within the foreseeable future. The enthusiasm shown by both lay and medical audiences for the LEPRO film was matched during the Seminar itself, where the lecturers gave emphasis to the wider involvement of the community in leprosy control and to its acceptance into comprehensive community care.

“LE SECOURS AUX LÉPREUX (CANADA) INC”

In 1961 a young Canadian nurse working in association with leprosy patients at Pollambakam (India), wrote to her uncle in Montreal, describing her work, its needs and its problems. His sympathy and enthusiasm were aroused, and in 1964 he began to circulate a bulletin of leprosy information among friends and interested people in Canada. From these small beginnings there has developed over the past 10 years a major charitable organisation dedicated to the relief of sufferers from leprosy, the annual receipts of which jumped from \$5950 in 1964 to \$765,000 in 1974. The Society is an active and influential member of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP), and its founder, Mr Théorêt has been elected President of ILEP for 1975.

“Le Secours aux Lépreux (Canada)” is a non-governmental and non-confessional Association; it cooperates with all other ILEP member Associations, and is prepared to contribute to any acceptable project irrespective of language, race or creed. We offer congratulations and best wishes to Mr Théorêt and the Directors of the Association.

GANDHI MEMORIAL LEPROSY FOUNDATION

The Annual Report of the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation for 1973-74 makes interesting reading. The work of the Foundation, summarized in the September 1974 Issue of *Leprosy Review* (Vol. 45, 274), has been fully maintained in all its varied aspects. Of particular interest is the initiative taken by the Foundation to emphasize to the Government of India the need for a higher allocation of funds for leprosy control during the forthcoming Fifth Five-year Plan period. Following a meeting of leading leprologists and other experts called together by the Foundation, an approach paper for national leprosy control work in the Fifth Five-year Plan was presented to Government, and a delegation of four members of the Foundation met the Honourable Prime Minister herself. As a result of her interest an allocation of Rs. 33 crores has been provisionally sanctioned for the National Leprosy Control Programme during the Fifth Five-year Plan.

TUBERCULOSIS, STILL A MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEM

The ninth report of the WHO Expert Committee on Tuberculosis contains interesting reading for leprosy workers. Estimates for the number of infectious tuberculosis cases in the world today, at the range of 15-20 million are very similar to those for sufferers from leprosy. In discussing the organisation of national tuberculosis programmes the report underlines the essential features of any comprehensive anti-tuberculosis programme as follows; it must be country-wide, and permanent rather than a crash programme or one time endeavour; it should match the attitudes and customs of the community and be adapted to the convenience of the consumers rather than of those providing the service; it must be developed as a well balanced component of the national health programme and fall within the range of available resources; the case-finding and treatment programme should be developed as an entity, and treatment should be free of charge and primarily ambulatory. Here are perfect terms of reference for all responsible for organizing leprosy control.