

LEPROSY CONGRESS IN CAIRO

The First Leprosy Congress organized in the United Arab Republic was held in the spacious hall of the Kasr el Aini Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, on 14 and 15 March, 1976. Nearly 500 participants registered, from 13 Arabic-speaking countries of the Near East, with two invited guests from England and France. Since the prime instigator and joint-organizer was Professor M El Zawahry, the internationally known dermatologist, the emphasis was on the skin aspects of leprosy. Almost the entire staffs of the Skin Departments of Cairo and Alexandria Medical Schools were there, in addition to representatives from Tanta, Assiut and Ain Shams.

The platform at the Inaugural Ceremony included the Minister of Health and the Minister for Higher Education, as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, their presence indicating the interest aroused in official and academic quarters.

Among the two score good papers presented, it would be invidious to cite those of outstanding merit, but mention should be made of excellent work being done in various aspects of immunology, staining techniques, and the nicotonic acid test. The papers will be published (in English) as Proceedings of the Congress.

The revival of interest in leprosy in Egypt serves as a reminder both of the very successful Congress on the International Leprosy Association held in Cairo in 1938, and of the continuing smouldering endemic in that country. There are at present 28,197 leprosy patients registered, of whom about 18,000 are under regular treatment; 1689 are in the two main residential leproseria (Cairo and Alexandria have 570 beds), and in provincial leprosy hospitals. The relapse rate is said to be in the neighbourhood of 12%; 4128 are classified as lepromatous and 3226 are under 14 years of age. The prevalence rate varies from 0.8 to 2.4 per thousand.

The Congress certainly increased the awareness of the problem of leprosy among dermatologists, and should encourage a more systematic attack on the problem.

Dr Stanley Browne, joint organizer of the Congress with Professor El Zawahry, gave the opening paper on "The Diagnosis of Early Leprosy" and the closing paper in which he summarized recent advances in the various branches of leprosy. The Egyptian dermatologists hope to plan a similar Congress next year.

LEPRA ESSAY COMPETITION FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD, EDINBURGH AND BIRMINGHAM: 1976

Following prize essay competitions for medical students in previous years in Oxford and Edinburgh, LEPRA have this year extended the offer to Birmingham, and the subject for all 3 universities is *The transmission of leprosy and tuberculosis in man*.

Entries should be of not more than 10,000 words, but it is emphasized that much shorter essays have won awards in previous years; length is not important. References should be included as in scientific publications. Existing knowledge on the transmission of these diseases should be summarized, but no credit will be given for the mere reproduction of material already published in books or journals. In the case of leprosy, particular attention should be given to constructive criticism of present trends in research on the transmission of this disease and to ideas for future work which might benefit the individual patient and also be of value in world leprosy control. The essay requires neither clinical

experience nor original work and entries from junior students will be most welcome.

Further details are available from the appropriate medical school offices. The closing date is 31 December, 1976 and the judges reserve the right to award the sum of £100 to one candidate, or to divide it amongst several candidates, or to withhold any award if entries are not of sufficient merit.