

AHRTAG

Amongst the many agencies which may be able to contribute expertise either directly or indirectly to leprosy control, AHRTAG, based in London, is one which has so far not been adequately described in the leprosy journals, and we therefore take this opportunity to reproduce in full the following account of its aims and activities—

Appropriate Health Resources & Technologies Action Group Ltd (AHRTAG) A WHO Collaborating Centre

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INTRODUCTION

The Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group (AHRTAG) is an independent, non-profit organization established in 1977 with initial financial support from WHO. It has recently been designated a WHO Collaborating Centre. Its function is to advance the concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness in health care, with particular emphasis on alternatives to high cost, high technology, hospital-based medical practice. It does this by operating an information clearing house, encouraging innovation, providing liaison and recommending technical consultants.

DOCUMENT COLLECTION AND PROJECT FILES

AHRTAG maintains a small but valuable collection of literature on primary health care and related appropriate technologies. This collection is probably unique in that it brings together many papers that are unpublished or that might otherwise remain relatively unknown and inaccessible. Many of AHRTAG's documents have been provided through a network of personal contacts throughout the world.

AHRTAG has established special technical files on important appropriate technologies for use in primary health care. Examples of current projects include: the "cold chain" for safe cold storage, transport and distribution of vaccines; oral rehydration for the treatment of acute diarrhoea; effective two-way radio communication systems for isolated communities; lightweight baby scales design for local manufacture.

TECHNICAL ENQUIRIES AND CONSULTANCIES

Some 400 technical enquiries have been received on a wide range of subjects. The number received each week is rapidly increasing, with 280 enquiries in the first 4 months of 1978 compared with 102 for the previous 6 months.

AHRTAG works closely with the WHO Expanded Programme on Immunization and has recommended consultants for the programme on the cold chain for the storage and distribution of vaccines. Educational materials and curricula for the training of technical officers who will operate the cold chain system have been developed under AHRTAG's supervision. These training materials have recently been field tested in Quito, Ecuador.

PUBLICATIONS

Dr Katherine Elliott's bibliography, *The Training of Auxiliaries in Health Care*, published by the Intermediate Technology Development Group in 1975, is currently being revised by popular demand. The new edition should be available before the end of 1978.

AHRTAG has contracted to identify and annotate 300 documents for inclusion in future volumes of the *Low Cost Rural Health Care and Health Manpower Training* series of annotated bibliographies produced by the International Development Research Centre.

Papers relevant to AHRTAG's interests have been presented at several international conferences.

Further publications are planned for the coming year.

VISITS AND CONTACTS

Between July 1977 and April 1978, 200 persons from some 30 countries visited AHRTAG. Meetings were arranged for groups of overseas postgraduate students studying for further qualifications in London.

Dr Katherine Elliott, with Mrs Arna Blum and Miss Muriel Skeet, organized the section on Health Auxiliaries at the International Hospital Federation Congress held in Tokyo during 1977. Following the Congress, visits were made to innovative health projects in Thailand and Hong Kong. Dr Elliott attended major WHO Consultations on Appropriate Technology for Health in New Delhi and Alexandria, and also visited Thailand and Iran on behalf of WHO.

AHRTAG has a list of over 4000 individuals and organizations with an active interest in health care. In addition, several thousand contacts have been obtained from the mailing lists of other organizations concerned with appropriate technology, health and development in the Third World.

LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

AHRTAG developed from the Rural Health Panel of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, and enjoys close relations with the parent body. Members of AHRTAG staff continue to serve on voluntary panels of

ITDG and there is an active exchange of information between the two organizations.

The Ciba Foundation gives indirect support to AHRTAG through the continuing association of its Assistant Director as Honorary Director of the new Group.

Working closely with WHO and with the U.K. Ministry of Overseas Development, AHRTAG has identified a number of opportunities for its services. Two modest projects, funded by the U.K. Ministry of Overseas Development, are already in progress, and other proposals in collaboration with WHO and ITDG are under consideration.

A contract for the identification and annotation of documents for the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, is nearing completion, and AHRTAG looks forward to continued association with this organization.

Council of Management: Sir Graham Bull, MD, FRCP—Chairman
 Katherine Elliott, MRCS, LRCP
 Dennis H. Frost, MBE
 Miles C. Hardie, MA, FHA
 David Morley, MD, FRCP

Staff: Katherine Elliott, MRCS, LRCP—
 Honorary Director
 Christopher Lomax, PhD—Administrator
 Arna Blum, BSc—Information Consultant
 Maureen Gadd, BA —Information Officers
 Sunil Mehra, BA

AHRTAG owes its existence to the many people who have provided information, contacts, published and unpublished papers, manuals, and books on health care throughout the world. In order to provide a worthwhile service, we need a constant supply of current material. Please write to us if you have documents, data, or experience which would interest us, and which would assist us in doing our work; if you have a problem with which we might be able to help; or if you have an interest in any aspect of health care in the Third World.

Our offices are open to the public during normal office hours and we welcome visitors, but, if possible, please write or phone in advance to inform us of your intended visit.