

**ETHIOPIA: PERSONAL REGISTRATION CARD AND PHOTOGRAPH**

W J O Beaumont, All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre, (ALERT), PO Box 165, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In view of the continuing difficulty of correctly registering and following up outpatients, particularly in diseases such as leprosy and tuberculosis, where long periods of treatment may be needed, it may be of interest to record information about a personal card system which is coming into general use in Ethiopia, especially in the towns and cities.

Since 1975, the new administration in Ethiopia has insisted on the development of a registration card system, which consists of a photograph and written details of the individual's name, age, sex, occupation, address, telephone number of his 'town unit' office and date of issue. The size of the card unfolded is approximately 140 × 100 mm, which corresponds closely to the international paper size A6 on the ISO-A series, though in fact the next size down, A7, (105 × 74 mm) could also be used.

Each town or city unit (kebele) has a number and within the kebele each house has its number. The kebeles are doing a great deal to see that individuals carry such a card at all times. The system has yet to be established throughout Ethiopia. People travelling or moving to another place need a letter from their kebele or farmers' association mentioning name, address and reason for travelling.

Both in Addis Ababa, and also in the leprosy control area of Shoa Province, we are already finding this card of considerable help. We do not register a patient's address unless he has shown his card or letter. This is repeated yearly to check the present address. It is of value in reducing the use of false or 'alternative' names and addresses, and in the rapid identification of patients when they return to clinic, or move to another area. It could perhaps be compared with the use of an address card in tuberculosis control in South India, already reported<sup>1</sup> to be helpful in both illiterate and literate patients.

Our purpose in writing is to suggest that such a simple and inexpensive device may be worth considering in some leprosy control schemes where large numbers of patients are involved. In view of the availability and fairly low cost of machines for laminating and sealing cards in plastic,\* some agencies may even consider the use of cards bearing not only the personal details above, but also basic information on diagnosis, classification, basic disability, grading and treatment.

**Reference**

- Radhakrishna S, Statagopan MC, Krishnaswami KV, Tripathy SP, Vaidyanathar B, Fox W. A study of the accuracy and factors influencing accuracy, of home addresses of patients obtained by registry clerks and address cards in four large towns in South India. *Tubercle*, 1980, 61, 197–206

\*These machines are becoming fairly widely available in various countries, but it may be helpful to record here the name and address of one (of Japanese manufacture) which is used in the UK, and known to be satisfactory. It is the Codor Lamipacker, and details are available from Mr K B Farrington, Exportential Services, Silk House, Park Green, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7QW. It is our understanding that sales rights have been granted to this company from Dorned BV, Herengracht 331, Amsterdam, Holland, to whom enquiries may also be addressed.