

Letters to the Editor

LEPROSY SURVEYS IN URBAN SLUMS – POSSIBILITIES FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Sir,

The problems and difficulties of undertaking effective surveys in densely populated urban areas have always intrigued me. Whilst working in Ghana the low number of leprosy cases registered for treatment at the Accra (capital city) clinic caused concern to the Ghana Leprosy Service and considerable thought was given to the possibility of undertaking an urban survey in that city. Unfortunately at the time there was neither the money or trained staff to mount an effective survey where a near 100% coverage could be assured.

It was with interest, therefore, that I read the article on the leprosy survey undertaken in part of Bombay and published under the above title. Unfortunately the authors did not elaborate on how they obtained the 81% coverage. Materials and methods were given only a few short lines; whilst the whole project is summed up in the sentence 'This study also shows that the slums could be surveyed, with minimum coverage of 80%, with proper planning and employing trained paramedical teams.'

What would be of great interest to all engaged in leprosy work is a detailed account of how the teams set about their work. The planning of such a complex operation would take considerable time and answers to the following questions would be most useful:

How many medical and paramedical staff were employed surveying the 8 areas?

What census data was available to the teams? areas, districts, streets, houses?

What precautions were taken to ensure that there was no duplication of examinations and how many examinations were undertaken by 1 team in a day?

Was the clinical examination of those seen a full examination, i.e. the whole body and, if so, how was this arranged? Were they examined in their own homes or at a central point?

Was any attempt made to examine the missing 19%?

Was treatment already available to the leprosy patients in the 8 areas and how were the new cases channelled to the treatment points?

Were other diseases noted?

I am sure that a paper on this subject in the 'Domiciliary and Field Work' section of *Leprosy Review* would provide a good deal of interest to many of the readers.

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