

Letters to the Editor

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIA LEARN ABOUT LEPROSY THROUGH HANDBILLS AND 'QUIZ' CONTEST

Sir,

On the occasion of the Anti-Leprosy Week in India in 1983, a handbill, carrying information about leprosy in either basic English, Telegu or Urdu, as appropriate, was distributed to 10th class students in 623 schools throughout the State of Andhra Pradesh. The handbill carried simple, clear information on the nature of leprosy as a disease, its drug treatment and control. No fewer than 42,700 handbills were distributed and on the next day we followed this up with a questionnaire to approximately one third of all the students in each school. We set multiple choice questions covering: the cause of leprosy, infectiousness, transmission, the reasons for fearing it, deformities, treatment, control. We allowed 10 days for the completion and return of the questionnaire forms, through headmasters of schools, to the District Leprosy Officers, who were responsible for correction and marking. The final results were sent to this office and prizes were awarded for the best entries.

This project was uncontrolled and it would clearly be of importance to repeat the exercise in another area, without the use of handbills, and to attempt a comparison. It is therefore difficult to draw definite conclusions from our preliminary study, but there is no doubt that the interest and enthusiasm shown not only by the school students, but also by the headmasters and teaching staff, was impressive. This approach to health education in leprosy in a vitally important section of the community requires a lot of hard work and planning, but it is simple in design, and inexpensive. We consider that it may be of value in other parts of India, and perhaps in other leprosy-endemic countries.

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