

Leprosy Control and Field Work

Plastic containers for clofazimine (Lamprene)

Ciba-Geigy have written to inform us of the availability of small plastic containers for clofazimine, devised to take 30 capsules of 50 mg, or 15 capsules of 100 mg, for daily self-administration by patients in either paucibacillary or multibacillary leprosy. They have a strong screw cap and the contents should be airtight. The company will supply them in reasonable quantities entirely free of charge; apply to Mr Peter Friedli, Ciba-Geigy, Pharma International, CH-4002, Basle, Switzerland.

Questions and Answers on the Implementation of Multiple Drug Therapy (MDT) for Leprosy

The Health Unit in OXFAM have recently revised and reprinted this booklet in their Practical Guide series, Number 3. It is a 35-page booklet covering the basic regimens recommended by WHO for the treatment of both paucibacillary and multibacillary leprosy, proceeding to a number of questions which have been raised by those using MDT in the field, and attempting to supply some of the answers. The appendices include; 1, a description of the OXFAM–LEPRA teaching–training pack of materials on leprosy; 2, a flow chart; 'basic steps for consideration in the implementation of MDT'; 3, quality control of slit-skin smears, 4, a copy of a chart for the bacteriological index (BI) in leprosy; 5, a body diagram for slit-skin smears or biopsies; 6, a grid system/diagram for the charting of lesions, slit-skin smears or biopsies; and 7, a scheme taking one from the 'start of MDT' to 'completion of surveillance'. Price £1.50, from The Health Unit, OXFAM, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, England.

Ganta Leprosy Center, Liberia, Africa

Particularly in view of its importance in the teaching and training of Liberian medical students in leprosy, we record the following information about this centre: The Ganta Leprosy Center was founded by the Methodist Mission in the early 1930s for victims of leprosy for which there was no cure at that time. The Methodist Mission took care of the Center up until 1976 when the National Leprosy Control Program took over. In April 1980, Sister Dr Margaret Chambers became the resident doctor with the task of revitalizing the Center as the only Referral Hospital for leprosy patients in the country. It handles severe cases of leprosy, those with complications of the disease like reaction, neuritis, ulcers, eye involvement, those needing surgery, etc. requiring hospitalization.

At the Center we now have 120 patients hospitalized, 200 patients who live at the Center for follow-up and observation, 40 patients who require custodial care as they are too crippled to manage on their own, and there is a group of 350 people who live in the town at the gate, which consists of patients, ex-patients, and the families.

One of our main goals is to help the patients help themselves, and many projects have been developed at the Center to help them achieve a degree of self-sufficiency so that they may be self-supporting when they return to their villages. Efforts are made to involve all the patients. Those who are not strong enough for farming are directed to the Arts and Crafts Project, where they learn a skill they can cope with. Full address: Ganta Leprosy Center, PO Box 1010, Monrovia, Liberia.

Bubble or calendar packs for multiple drug therapy in leprosy

Recently, in association with the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation, Ciba-Geigy in Switzerland have developed bubble or calendar packs for the dispensing of multiple drug therapy to patients with both paucibacillary and multibacillary leprosy. A diagram of one side of the pack for multibacillary patients is shown below; a similar but smaller pack has been made for the treatment of paucibacillary leprosy using only two drugs (dapson and rifampicin). A few thousand of these packs have been produced in Manila and are currently in use in two different areas of the Philippines. Plans are under discussion for a controlled clinical trial, possibly in Thailand, to establish if this 'device' significantly improves patient compliance and regularity of attendance. The expense of production is of course considerable and there is unfortunately no guarantee that tablets once removed by the patient at home (during self-administration of dapson or clofazimine) will be ingested.

However there is preliminary evidence that the packs are highly appreciated by both patients and staff and it is to be hoped that they will contribute, at least under some circumstances, to the more effective implementation of MDT. Please note that these packs are not as yet available from either of the agencies mentioned above but that we shall print further information about them in a future issue of this Journal, together with an account of any trial which may be set up.

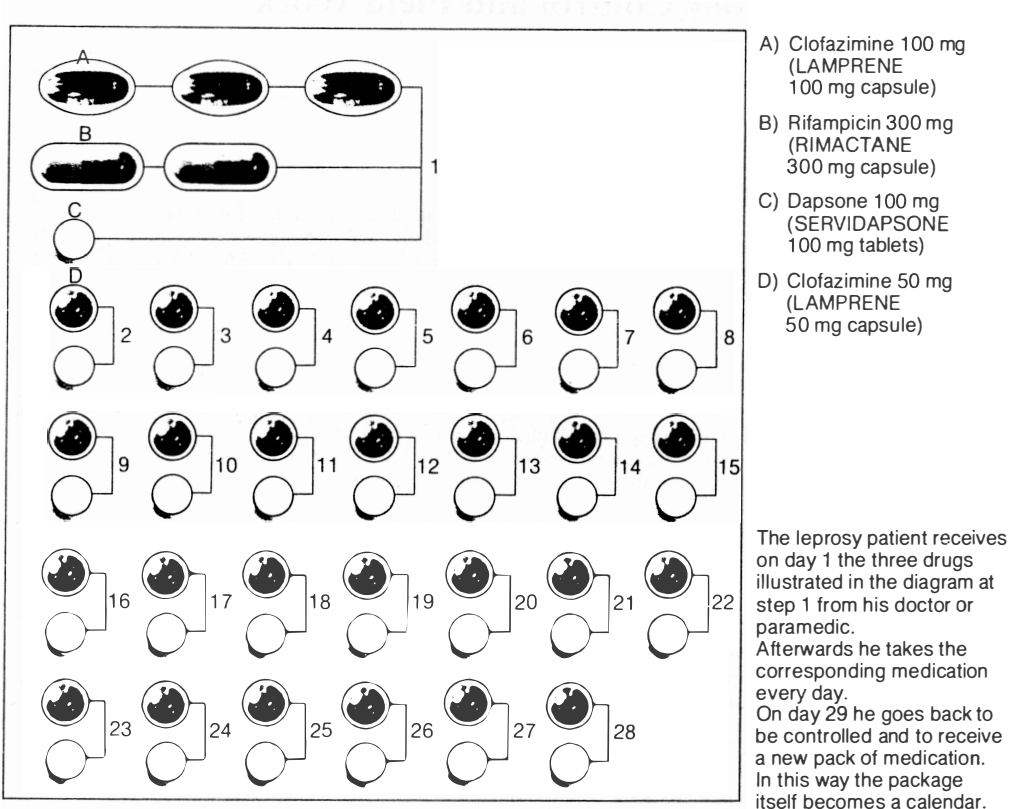


Figure 1. This diagram shows 1 side of the pack for drugs used in the treatment of multi-bacillary leprosy: those at top left are given under supervision, once monthly. Those labelled 2–28 are taken by the patient daily, at home, unsupervised. On the other side of the pack, the tablets and capsules are clearly visible in their individual ‘bubbles’, for pressing out at the time of administration. A similar, but smaller pack has been produced for dapsone and rifampicin in the treatment of paucibacillary leprosy.

With acknowledgements to Ciba-Geigy for permission to reproduce this diagram from their publication *Leprosy Can Be Cured*, first edition, Basle, May, 1985.

Clofazimine; a tip to prevent capsules sticking together

Many leprosy workers, particularly in hot climates, have noted with dismay that capsules of clofazimine may on occasion stick together, sometimes resulting in a more or less total loss of the content of a bottle. Dr Jon Wok Lee, WHO Medical Officer, Tomez Memorial Hospital, Suva, Fiji, has observed that this can be avoided by a simple measure. Take a tablet of dapsone and crush it into a fine powder. If this powder is then mixed or shaken up with the clofazimine capsules, it acts as a kind of separating ‘talc’ in the container and prevents the capsules sticking together.