

Teaching of leprosy

PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM

*Held on the occasion of
the 20th Annual General Meeting of the
All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre (ALERT)*

in

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Preface

This supplement contains the papers presented during a Symposium on the TEACHING OF LEPROSY held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 19th March 1986, on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre (ALERT).

The purpose of this Symposium was to show how the teaching of leprosy has been developed according to a multidisciplinary approach at ALERT, also taking the opportunity to present essential aspects of the history of this institution.

The paper of Professor Paul Brand provides a unique documentation of the initial events and the concepts behind the foundation of ALERT. The paper by Dr. Widad Kidane Mariam describes the further development of the institution, and the Chairman of its Board, Dr. Yayahyirad Kitaw comments in his introduction on major concepts and principles involved in this development. The relationship between ALERT and its foreign sponsors is described by Herr Kober, the obvious candidate for this presentation due to his extensive work with ALERT over many years and his function as ILEP coordinator for Ethiopia.

The Kellersberger Memorial Lecture is a distinct feature of the relationship between ALERT and the Ethiopian Medical Community. We appreciate the contribution of Dr. Azeb Tamrat from the Ethiopian Medical Association in this regard giving credit to Dr. Kellersberger and American Leprosy Missions making this important series of lectures better known internationally.

The papers on training are quite varied, as they should be, since training obviously concerns many different aspects of leprosy in its regular execution at ALERT. Dr. W. Felton Ross comments on the dual need for knowledge and development of attitudes to work, rightly emphasizing the latter. The papers on training also illustrate the essential contribution of the hospital to training, the tremendous influence of the introduction of the WHO multi drug therapy regimens at a grand scale at ALERT on training, and the interaction between ALERT and the Armauer Hansen Research Institute on the same compound. In my view, the close collaboration and mutual interdependence of these two institutions make this compound unique in the leprosy field.

The final paper concentrates on prospects for the future of ALERT in the African context as seen by an African. We appreciate greatly that Gizaw Tsehai, the Ethiopian Minister of Health, presented this view.

I thank all authors for collaboration and prompt delivery of manuscripts.

The Proceedings of this Symposium are published as supplements to *Ethiopian Medical Journal* and *Leprosy Review* according to the decision by ALERT's Board of Directors. Having the supplement in the *Ethiopian Medical Journal* will enable the material presented at the Symposium in Addis Ababa to be available to a large audience within Ethiopia, while the supplement of *Leprosy Review* will permit distribution of valuable experience at ALERT and AHRI to leprologists and scientists on a world wide scale.

I thank the Editorial staff of both journals for their efforts and contribution to this fine example of international collaboration.

I also wish to thank Kari Bertelsen, Alison Olsen, and Carol Østby for editorial assistance and all their work to make the manuscripts ready for printing.

MORTEN HARBOE

Introduction

YAYEHYIRAD KITAW

Chairman of the ALERT Board

Twenty years in the fight against a disease such as leprosy, which has been a scourge of mankind for millennia, might appear quite a short time. On the other hand, twenty years in the second half of the 20th century, the period of the scientific and technological revolution, is quite a long period. Such is the apparent dilemma of leprosy in the two decades of ALERT; many reasons for hope, but few for technological optimism.

The hopes, the developments and the setbacks in the teaching of leprosy will be discussed at this symposium, with special emphasis on the experience at ALERT. I shall therefore only highlight some important events and trends.

The two decades of ALERT can, generally speaking, be divided into a first decade of establishment, and a second of consolidation.

The first decade was characterized by the exhilarating experience of launching a new idea, of translating it into a programme, giving it an organizational structure, securing funds and personnel. That was indeed the heyday; a time of commitment as well as diplomacy.

A number of names are associated with the establishment of ALERT. Some, I am sure, will be mentioned in the «Historical outline of ALERT». But three names are particularly attached to this first decade. A programme of training, specifically tailored to work on leprosy in Africa with a strong component of control, had to be developed and consistently carried out. Relevant research programmes had to be developed, and the establishment of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) during this period was a milestone in this endeavour. Creating the necessary organizational framework, the funding, soliciting and sustaining sponsorship meant foresight, tact, diplomacy and managerial capability. ALERT was fortunate to have these three persons for the greater part of this first decade: Dr. W. Felton Ross, Director of Training, Major Onni Niskanen, Executive Director, and Professor Charles Leithead, Chairman of the Board.

The second decade has been a decade of consolidation. Based on an extensive and thorough evaluation, programmes and management were reorganized, administrative procedures were more clearly established. Penetrating discussions on future development of the leprosy control programme, organizationally and technically, were undertaken.

Organizationally the issue of integration was discussed at a conference, and is still being explored. Training in tuberculosis has been started in association with the International Union against Tuberculosis.

The leprosy control programme has been enlarged and now encompasses the whole of the Shoa Administrative Region. More importantly, after long and thorough consideration, the multiple drug therapy (MDT) approach was adopted. In view of the development of dapsone-resistant strains, in whose recognition ALERT has played an important part, the change in control method was inevitable. But because of the nature of *Mycobacterium leprae*, ALERT, like many similar organizations, has followed the WHO recommendations closely in the MDT programme, realising that a number of issues have yet to be resolved. The MDT programme therefore needs very close follow-up, and has to be supported by further research.

An important aspect of the development of an exemplary MDT programme at ALERT is that the training of African leprosy control workers in this new and important field is now well established. The Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), which has been consolidated in the course of the decade, has played an important role in this and other technical develop-

ments at ALERT. ALERT has played an important role in the training of leprosy control workers in Africa. A testimony to this is the fact that, at a recent African meeting on leprosy control, the majority of those in positions of leadership were people who had been trained at ALERT. Its trainees are also found in many other parts of the world.

With the introduction of the MDT programme on a large scale, with the training in tuberculosis, with the active clinical research programme in association with AHRI and with a diversified, well established and acknowledged training programme, the stage is set for the Third Decade of ALERT.

I am convinced that the third decade will be one of innovation and accelerated development for ALERT and leprosy control in Africa, and consequently one of hope to leprosy patients, to whom all the sponsors and members of ALERT are dedicated.