

The Kellersberger memorial lecture

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It is a great honour for me to address the audience on this special occasion: the twentieth anniversary of ALERT, and on such a subject: "The Kellersberger Memorial Lecture."

The Kellersberger Memorial Lecture was established in 1974 by the American Leprosy Mission, under the auspices of ALERT, as a memorial to Dr. Eugene Kellersberger.

Allow me to retrace the exceptional life of the late Dr. Kellersberger.

Eugene Roland Kellersberger was born in Texas in 1888, got his M.D. from Washington University Medical School in 1915, and worked as a medical missionary in the Presbyterian Church from 1916 to 1940. He arrived in Africa in 1916, where he undertook extensive work on sleeping sickness.

He founded Bibanga Medical School and Hospital, in the Belgian Congo, now Zaire. There he founded, in 1930, the first organized Leprosy Hospital; from 1940 to 1953 he worked in the American Leprosy Mission and in 1944, while he was the president, gave a grant for training to the Princess Zenebework Hospital, which, as you know, became ALERT in 1966. Dr. Kellersberger was an exceptional figure, decorated on many occasions for his service; he was a member of the American Society of Tropical Medicine, the International Leprosy Association, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the United States Public Health Service.

It is in the memory of this great man that the first inaugural lecture which coincided with the Xth Annual Medical Conference of the Ethiopian Medical Association was delivered in May 1974 by J. Convit.

The latter, at that time Director of PAHO International for Training and Research in Leprosy and Related Diseases from Caracas, lectured on "Leprosy and Leishmaniasis. Similar Clinical Immunological, Pathological Models". The lecturer

stated quite rightly, "It is for me a most deep spiritual satisfaction to have been designated to inaugurate the Kellersberger Memorial Lectures named in honour of such a distinguished worker in the field of the rehabilitation of the leprosy patient".

The second lecture, entitled "Immunometabolism in Leprosy" was delivered by Olaf K. Skinsnes, Professor of Pathology in Honolulu; based on his own research, it made the audience aware of the role of acid mucopolysaccharide as a metabolic substrate for leprosy bacilli.

Dr. Graham Wedell presented the IIIrd Lecture on May 27, 1976, "A Neuroanatomist Looks at Leprosy".

After an interruption of one year, Dr. SG Browne, from the Leprosy Mission, United Kingdom, a personal friend of Kellersberger, delivered, "Leprosy Control - Present Position and Future Prospects". Taking the audience back to what he called the dark years of the presulphone era, of chaulmoogra and hydrocarpus with exotic names like gorli oil, cajaput, cashew nuts and sap, passing by the illusion and delusion of "30 odd years of widespread monotherapy", he stressed the magnitude of the problem of leprosy in the world and the prospect of multi drug therapy. The integration of leprosy while excellent in intention may in practice lead to an erosion of the quality of the treatment of the leprosy sufferer, Dr. Browne conclude: "so far all in all our efforts do not seem to have succeeded in containing this scourge, though our therapy and care have reduced the toll of individual suffering and apprehension".

The following year the audience had the pleasure of listening to Dr. RC Hastings, Head of the Pharmacology Research Department at Carville, who gave a talk on "Immunosuppressive - Antiinflammatory Thalidomide Analogues", stressing the role of thalidomide in the management of erythema nodosum leprosum.

On 31 May, 1980 Dr. Paul Brand, another prominent figure from Carville, delivered his lecture entitled "Living without Pain".

In 1981 Dr. H. Sansarricq gave a thorough and extensive lecture on the "General Situation of Leprosy in the World". As he rightly put it, "The magnitude of the leprosy problem expressed in number is not in general very impressive..."

however, we have to admit that we do not know how to measure human sufferings and social losses". Dr. Sansarricq had a more optimistic view than Dr. Browne, of course; this was after Alma Ata.

In 1982 Dr. Styblo from the International Union against Tuberculosis from Paris, on the hundredth anniversary of Kock's discovery, presented the most opportune lecture. "Tuberculosis and its Control, a Lesson to be learned from Past Experience, and Implication for Leprosy Control Programmes".

Dr. Job's lecture on "Lepromin Test and Its Role in the Management of Leprosy" was received with acclaim.

1984 was a special year for the Ethiopian Medical Association, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary, and on this occasion Dr. Levy's lecture on "Chemotherapy of Leprosy, a Tool for Leprosy Control", was listened to in a spirit of general euphoria.

The "Role of BCG in the control of leprosy" was presented on 31 May, 1985 by Dr. Fine from the Ross Institute, London. This eminent professor gave prolific examples of contradictory results in the protection of BCG against tuberculosis and leprosy, and pointed out with humour: "that leprosy and tuberculosis services are being integrated throughout the world by immunology even if not by bureaucracy".

I have tried to give an overview of the Kellersberger Memorial Lectures given over the years at the annual medical conferences of the Ethiopian Medical Association from 1974 to 1985. As you will have noticed, the American Leprosy Mission and ALERT have been extremely meticulous in maintaining a high standard in the selection of the speakers, who always strove to keep the audience abreast of the development of new ideas and controversies.

The Ethiopian Medical Association, on its side, by always reserving the best time on its programme, presented the best forum for all health workers in Ethiopia, for the annual medical conference is now to attract as many doctors as possible from different regions of Ethiopia, and, believe me, no one misses the Kellersberger Memorial Lecture. It is the ideal forum for the dissemination of ideas and I am certain it will continue. Those who have attended this lecture know that the only limitation for attendance is the capacity of the auditorium.

The Ethiopian Medical Association had the pleasure of printing the whole lecture in its organ, the Ethiopian Medical Journal. Since 1982, ALERT contributes financially towards the printing of the journal where the lecture is published, and the Ethiopian Medical Association expresses its thanks for the US\$ 5,000 received.

Our thanks go to the American Leprosy Mission and ALERT. Ethiopian doctors and other health professionals have been the beneficiaries of the Kellersberger Memorial Lecture, and on this occasion, I should like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to all who have made this lecture possible.

On the 75th anniversary of the American Leprosy Mission, Julia Lake, the wife of the late Dr. Kellersberger confessed that, in 1930, they had wished to have the world as a wedding gift, and may I say that the Kellersberger Memorial Lecture, in a way, has made their dream come true.

Finally, on this 20th anniversary of ALERT, I should like again to quote Julia Lake: "Love is like a child feeding honey to a bee with broken wings." I enjoy thinking that those who work in and support ALERT and other similar institutions are like this child, feeding honey to a bee with broken wings.