

Letters to the Editor

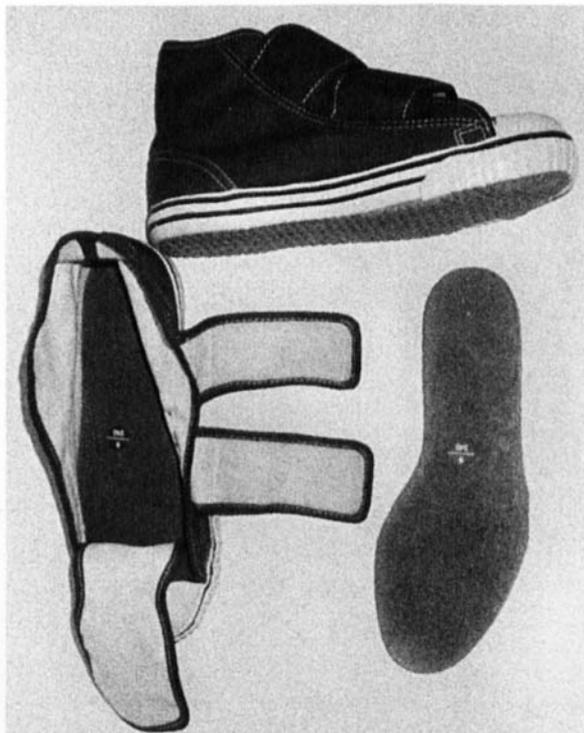
SPECIALLY DEEPEINED CANVAS FOOTWEAR WITH MICROCELLULAR RUBBER INNERSOLES FOR LEPROSY PATIENTS WITH INSENSITIVE FEET

Sir,

I understand that there is a great deal of difficulty in obtaining appropriate footwear for leprosy patients and I would therefore like to inform you that my Mission may be able to assist in this matter.

Briefly, we have a stockpile of footwear in Swaziland which we would be willing to supply to other organizations. A local branch of the Bata Shoe Company has been extremely cooperative in designing and producing specially deepened canvas shoes and canvas ankle-high 'boots' with 14 mm thick microcellular rubber innersoles. The shoes and 'boots' are of high quality, attractively finished and look identical to the conventional canvas shoes sold in local stores. They have not acquired a reputation as 'leprosy shoes' and are extremely popular with patients (Figure 1).

Bata made the shoes from standard materials, building extra depth on to conventional aluminium lasts with temporary layers of cardboard and rubber cement. An interesting and attractive feature of this footwear is that it is fastened with Velcro straps. This means that there are



no shoelaces to be broken or lost (one of our biggest problems with other shoes) and they are easily adjusted and fastened by patients with insensitive or damaged hands.

The shoes are available in several colours. Initially, we have had each size produced in a different colour, e.g. size 7s are all blue, size 8s green. This was done to comply with production volume restrictions. However, if sufficiently large orders are received, we will be able to mix the colours within a particular shoe size e.g. red and blue size 7s. We feel that by issuing shoes of different colours, the risk of them becoming known as 'leprosy shoes' is lessened. We have in stock sizes 5–9. These are metric sizes. Size 7, for example, has an internal sole length of 260 mm, with a maximum width of 90 mm. The step up or down in length between each size is about 5 mm.

The length of service of this footwear is obviously determined by the patient's occupation and environment. Rural patients labouring in farm fields during the wet season get 6 months of service from a pair of shoes—the canvas uppers disintegrate long before the soles show signs of wearing through. In less rough conditions the shoes may last a year or longer. We recommend that the shoes should always be worn with a pair of well-fitting socks.

Due to Bata's generosity, we are able to supply this footwear at the following prices: shoes, including special innersoles, US\$3.50 (all sizes and colours); boots, including special innersoles, US\$5.00 (all sizes and colours). These prices exclude shipping.

I must stress that these prices are subject to alteration should the rates of foreign exchange fluctuate appreciably. Shipping costs will be notified on request.

People wanting further information or wishing to order samples are requested to write directly to: Mr Frikkie Naude, Administrator, Leprosy Control Programme, PO Box 1027, Manzini, Swaziland.

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