

OCCURRENCE OF LEPROSY IN MANY GENERATIONS OF THE SAME FAMILY

Sir,

It was interesting to read the articles, 'The occurrence of leprosy in an eight-member family—a case report' (*Lepr Rev* 1984, **55**, 47–50) and subsequently 'Occurrence of leprosy in many members of the same family' (*Lepr Rev* 1985, **56**, 80–1).

We had the opportunity to see a family with leprosy in 3 generations. The family was living in the eastern part of Libya. Out of 10 members involved, only 2 were known cases and those were registered with the Leprosy Clinic, Benghazi, Libya. The rest were discovered on examination of family contacts. The index case, the grandmother, aged 75 years, was a known case of lepromatous leprosy. No record existed for her husband who had died many years previously. She had 2 sons and 3 daughters. All the 3 daughters, aged 35, 42 and 45 years respectively, were found to have borderline leprosy. Both sons were unaffected.

The 1st daughter had 11 children. Her husband was free but 2 of her sons had leprosy. The elder son aged 30 years had BT leprosy and was a known case registered with our clinic. The other son aged 15 years had BL leprosy. Her other 4 sons and 4 daughters were unaffected.

The 2nd daughter had 4 sons. They were all free. Her husband was also free of leprosy.

The 3rd daughter had 4 sons and 1 daughter. The daughter aged 16 years was found to have borderline leprosy. Her husband was also found to have active BL leprosy. Incidentally her husband had a 2nd wife who was unaffected and so were her children.

The index case (grandmother) was living with her eldest son who did not have leprosy. He had 6 daughters and 3 sons. Two daughters aged 25 years and 16 years respectively were found to have borderline leprosy.

The family of the 2nd son could not be examined.

All the newly detected cases were registered and put on multiple drug therapy.

In this family, leprosy was thus seen in 3 generations. Surprisingly, none of the newly detected cases complained about the disease. All were detected by active clinical examination. The occurrence of leprosy in this particular family leads one to speculate that heredity plays an important role in leprosy, although close contact must also be recognized as a factor in transmission. Another interesting observation was that only 2 males (if we exclude the husband of the 3rd daughter) were involved as compared to 7 females.

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