3 After the unfortunate experience of dapsone monotherapy and case reports of rifampicin resistant leprosy,\(^2\) rifampicin monotherapy appears to be unjustified even in PB leprosy patients. If resistance to rifampicin becomes ubiquitous as has happened with dapsone, we will lose the most potent antileprosy drug available to us today.

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References


FIELD DIAGNOSIS OF EARLY LEPROSY

Sir,

I would like to comment on Dr Smith’s paper (*Lepr Rev*, 1987; 58: 141–8) which describes the use of a questionnaire of 20 case histories. The diagnosis of leprosy is based on the presence of at least one of the three cardinal signs of anaesthesia, thickening of peripheral nerves at the sites of predilection and the finding of acid-fast bacilli. The 20 cases reported give no details of skin-smear results and diagnoses are made in the absence of any of the cardinal signs, e.g. case history 3 and 18. I note also that the location of the hypopigmented patches influences the diagnosis in two similar cases, when lesions are on the face (case 1) the response is ‘suspect’ while when on the buttocks (case 18) ‘affected’ is comparatively preferred.

I disagree with the diagnosis in case 1, since there is a history of contact with an infectious case ‘affected’ would be the possible correct diagnosis. I also question the diagnoses in cases 1, 8 and 12 where the sex of the child seems to influence the decision and I would disagree with the diagnosis in cases 13 and 19 which I find confusing.

However, despite my cautionary comments I do appreciate the attention that this paper gives to this much neglected area of leprosy.

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REPLY—FIELD DIAGNOSIS OF EARLY LEPROSY

Sir,

I have read Dr Kulkarni’s comments carefully and I welcome the opportunity to reply.

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr Kulkarni that this is indeed a much neglected area in leprosy and it has thus been with some trepidation that I have attempted to tackle the subject of the field diagnosis of early leprosy.

In defence of the ‘standard’ diagnoses used in the case histories I would point out that the majority of the 79 field workers who completed the questionnaire agreed with the standard