

ARE BACTERIAL COUNTS ON SLIT-SKIN SMEARS IN LEPROSY AFFECTED BY PREPARING SLIDES UNDER FIELD CONDITIONS?

Sir,

Several years ago we carried out simple trials on more than 300 patients/slides over a 6-month period. It was our finding that no difference was found if the slides were dried in the sunlight or shade if drying time was never longer than 5 minutes. We did find a difference when the slides were not stored in a lightproof container after fixation and up to the staining period. The main difference that we encountered was the difference in the quality of smear collection between skin-smear technicians who receive longer more intensive training and work continually with the same work and that of paramedicals who received what we consider very limited training experience in collecting smears. We later also checked the readability of slides after staining and stored in light and non-lightproof containers with oil left on the slide and slides washed. There appeared to be no significant difference between the latter but the results were marked if they had not been stored in airtight lightproof containers. The collection of the smear is what we find needs continual supervision and monitoring.

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