

REPLY: HONEY AND PROPOLIS AS POSSIBLE PROMOTERS OF THE HEALING OF ULCERS IN LEPROSY

Sir,

Dr L A Wiseman has advocated a sugar paste for the treatment of ulcers in leprosy patients (*Lepr Rev*, 1989; **60**: 67). In this context two other substances merit consideration; namely, honey and propolis. The latter, also termed bee glue, is a related but more resinous plant-derived substance used by bees to seal defects in their hives. Honey has been shown in several studies to promote wound healing and to inhibit growth of bacteria.^{1,2} Propolis has strong bactericidal properties, especially against Gram positive bacteria and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* but also against pseudomonads and other Gram negative bacteria.³ In addition, ethanolic extracts of propolis have been shown to promote the regeneration of connective tissue, cartilage and bone.⁴

It appears likely that the healing properties of honey and propolis are due, at least in part, to the presence of flavonoids—a class of molecules found in all photosynthesizing cells. Some flavonoids are known to be anti-inflammatory and to promote the regeneration of collagen.⁵

Honey is, of course, widely available. Propolis is also available in many regions and is prepared for use by dissolving it in ethanol to form a tincture. It is also commercially available, as a tincture, from Ainsworth's Pharmacy, London and from Boiron et Cie, Lyon, France. These substances may, in view of their claimed effects on connective tissue regeneration, be of particular benefit in cases where there is underlying damage to cartilage and bone.

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References

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