

REPLY: RECOMMENDING DRUG REGIMENS TO SMEAR NEGATIVE MB CASES AFTER PROLONGED DAPSONE MONOTHERAPY

Sir,

The question of how to deal with dapsones-treated smear-negative multibacillary patients was discussed in the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy. *Sixth Report* (WHO Technical Report Series No. 768, 1988) which made the recommendation that, where resources permit, such patients should be given MDT for two years. It is this recommendation that is referred to in my paper. The reason for giving MDT is to prevent relapse which occurs at the rate of about 2% of patients per year. While the recommendation of the Expert Committee is generally for leprosy control programmes with the proviso 'where resources permit', in individual instances judgements may have to be made on the basis of the specific local situation. In a wider context, it is pertinent to point out that one of the factors making leprosy control successful through MDT possible is the application of standard treatment regimens and procedures rather than individualized treatment approaches.

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