

Book Reviews

Guido Groenen *La lépre en pratique*.

This book is written for district medical officers who are in charge of the overall health problems in the district and for whom leprosy is also one of their responsibilities.

The author has successfully used simple language and therefore the book reads very easily. One has the impression that it is a compilation of notes prepared for a course in leprosy and edited in bookform. There are very many cross-references from one paragraph to the other, e.g. see 5.8.3.1., see 5.8.3.2.

The book consists of 7 chapters, 5 appendices followed by a very practical and adequate bibliography mentioning the most important and recent publications on leprosy and its control which are available in French, and a list of addresses where these publications can be obtained.

Chapter 1, bacteriology; Chapter 2, immunology; Chapter 3, epidemiology: the term 'infection' is not well defined and the treatment of all existing cases is discussed under primary prevention, which in fact is a secondary prevention. Chapter 4, signs and symptoms. Here most of the signs and symptoms which may occur in leprosy regardless of the classification, are given a short description. After reading this chapter, it is still impossible to make a diagnosis of leprosy, which is handled in the following chapter. The distinction between primary and secondary deformities is somewhat mixed up.

Chapter 5, management of patients is the main part of the book (131 pp.). It covers quite a number of subjects, after a short introduction there follows case-detection, how to examine a patient, diagnosis and classification (Jopling), treatment (WHO), reactions, rehabilitation and eye lesions. As a whole this chapter is excellent. Definitions and decisions to be taken are short and clear and contain many practical details useful under field conditions. Under bacteriological examination, it is a pity that the sequence in which the smears have to be put on the slide is not stressed: first smear on the far end from the number or the other way round. The author warns, under classification, that 'tuberculoid leprosy' is not synonymous with paucibacillary (PB), but in a few occasions tuberculoid is used where it should be PB. Reversal reactions are mentioned as 'réaction type 1', 'réaction réverse' or 'réaction d'inversion'.

The use of only one term may avoid possible confusion. In differential diagnosis, a short description of the most common African diseases is given, together with the differences from leprosy and suggestions for their treatment. This latter point is a very welcome idea. Rehabilitation deals mainly with the treatment of deformities in the field as far as possible.

Chapter 6, health education in leprosy; Chapter 7, planning of a leprosy control programme. This chapter is intended for a more senior level: central or provincial. It is a short summary of a few publications mentioned in the bibliography.

The Appendixes refer mainly to practical techniques in the laboratory, rehabilitation, eye examination and treatment, suggestions for documents which need to be kept and the day-to-day management of the project. The explanation and example on how to calculate the drug requirements for a certain period, so that there is no shortage and wastage of drugs, is very practical.

In summary it is a very practical and adequate book for people in the field who have to deal with leprosy and it deserves widespread distribution in French-speaking Africa.

J A Cap

Leprosy, Third Edition. Anthony Bryceson and Roy E. Pfaltzgraff

This excellent handbook should prove of value not only to medical students and doctors in leprosy endemic countries but also to workers in other fields who require a basic introduction to that aspect of the subject which impinges on their own discipline.

The first four chapters provide a sound scientific introduction, the clear description of the clinical features following on logically from the masterly chapter on Clinical Pathology.

Diagnosis is dealt with comprehensively, with due note being taken of the pitfalls presented by other skin conditions common in the tropics.

The chapter on treatment summarizes the properties of the various drugs in common use and more particularly those constituting the WHO-recommended multi-drug regimens. It emphasizes the importance of early recognition and prompt treatment of reactional conditions and the associated neuritis and stresses the need for education of the patient both as to compliance with the prescribed therapy and as to the prevention of disability.

The basic elements of immunology are presented clearly and simply and related to the clinico-pathological spectrum of leprosy and to reactions. Matters on which there is controversy or difference of opinion among the experts are identified so that the result is a generally acceptable consensus.

A short chapter on the management of reactions is of practical value both to the hospital doctor and to the field worker. The observation that 'Early diagnosis and treatment and energetic management of reactional states should prevent the development of all disabilities' deserves wide publicity. The authors' experience that clofazimine is of value in the treatment of Type 1 reactions is not shared by all workers, but otherwise the measures advocated are those generally recommended.

The complications due to nerve damage are well described and are illustrated by some particularly good photographs and clear diagrams. At the outset it is emphasised that 'Prevention of nerve damage needs to be constantly stressed as the single most important aspect of leprosy management and one that is often neglected', and the authors proceed to do this in the following chapters on the Eye in Leprosy, Physical Rehabilitation (which includes much of great practical value in the prevention and management of plantar ulceration) and Social, Psychological and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The final chapters cover Experimental Leprosy, with a historical review as well as an up-to-date account of recent advances; Epidemiology, in which the authors aim to provoke thought and further study by posing relevant and important questions, rather than to provide answers unsupported by firm data; and Leprosy Control which reviews the principles and the methods currently in operation, their achievements and their limitations, and concludes with a timely call for the development of practical measures for primary prevention.

Almost inevitably there are a few typographical errors but these do not detract from the high quality of the presentation. Readers whose first language is not English will find the text readily understandable and will appreciate the didactic style. Many will find the list of references for 'Further Reading', given at the end of each chapter, especially helpful.

Hopefully, this Third Edition will enjoy even greater popularity than its predecessors.

Harold W Wheate

Published by Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1990. 256 pp; £9.95; ISBN No 0 443 03373 0.

The Indian Leprologists Look Back

A questionnaire was sent to 22 Indian leprologists of international reknown and the replies, tape-recordings, received from 16 of them comprise this interesting collection of informal, personal reminiscences. The group includes clinicians, surgeons, epidemiologists and research workers. The brief accounts of their work and achievements, as well as their varied perspectives on present trends in leprosy control and their hopes for the future, constitute a historical summary of leprosy work in India during the past 40 years. At the same time they give us an insight into the personalities and motivation of some of the best known leprologists of our day.

The book has been produced most economically (financial support from three leprosy voluntary organizations is acknowledged) to make it available to all grades of leprosy workers in India as a means of encouragement and indeed of inspiration. However, it should have a wider appeal and is warmly recommended as light reading by all involved in leprosy control and the care of leprosy patients.

Harold W Wheate

Acworth Leprosy Hospital Society for Research, Rehabilitation and Education, Wadala, Bombay-400 031, India. Price Rs. 25/-.