

DISAPPOINTING EXPERIENCES WITH BLISTER-CALENDAR PACKS

Sir,

In the provincial leprosy control programmes of south and south-east Sulawesi, Indonesia, blister-calendar packs (MB-Combi and PB-Combi, produced by Ciba Geigy) have been used since 1990 for selected patients. Only patients in remote areas, where it is difficult or impossible to attend monthly clinics, are provided with blister-calendar packs for unsupervised MDT for a maximum of 3 months.

For these patients blister calendar packs have logistical and operational advantages over loose drugs, but our experiences with the MB-Combi packs have been disappointing.

Our patients often find it extremely difficult to remove the clofazimine capsules from the pack. In our experience clofazimine tends to stick to the plastic, which causes the capsules to rupture, even when gently trying to remove them. The 100 mg capsules are usually more difficult to remove than the 50 mg capsules. If patients without disabilities face problems, it can be imagined what difficulties are encountered by patients with a loss of sensation or other disabilities of the fingers.

It should be remarked that the climate in south, as well as in south-east Sulawesi, is warm and humid. However, with loose clofazimine in containers of 1000 capsules, we face few problems. For patients not eligible for blister-calendar packs we use small personal containers where the somewhat sticky clofazimine is mixed with DDS, which provides a powdery white coating to the clofazimine.

We would like to know if there are other control programmes facing similar problems with blister-calendar packs.

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