

Book Review

A Guide on Leprosy. N. S. Dharmshaktu

The author of this Guide has been working at the National Headquarters of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in New Delhi, India, since 1985 and is Assistant Director of Health Services (Leprosy), in which position he has been able to study the development of the national Leprosy Control (later Eradication) Programme through the years and the growth of medical, paramedical and technical services in both government and voluntary sectors. The Guide has been written in an individual capacity and is published by a nongovernment agency, *The Indian Leprosy Foundation*, 11 Hardevi Society, Caves Road, Bombay 400 060, India. The first two pages refer to the magnitude of the leprosy problem in India, but at the same time acknowledge the remarkable success of multiple drug therapy in reducing prevalence; the number of patients on record in 1994 was 0.95 million and dropped to 0.74 million in 1995 (the latest figure from WHO, May 1996, is 0.56 million). The States of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have the largest number of patients, followed by Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The first six chapters cover basic aspects of leprosy, the situation in India, the role of voluntary agencies, diagnosis, classification, reactions and multiple drug therapy. Chapters 7–10 (66 pages out of a total of 131 in the Guide) are almost entirely devoted to a detailed description of the various agencies available for leprosy patients in India, including: rehabilitation services provided by nongovernment agencies and central institutions, rehabilitation of the handicapped under Ministry of Welfare/Labour, the current status of the handicapped in leprosy, and suggestions for deformity care. This information is not only remarkably up-to-date and comprehensive, but may well prove surprising to many people working in the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) of India and voluntary agencies. How many State Leprosy Officers or other programme managers, one wonders, are aware that India has 12 institutions producing micro-cellular rubber chappals (Indian style protective footwear), plus 59 other centres which provide footwear and rehabilitation services to leprosy handicapped, 55 special cells in various states for employment of the handicapped, 23 special employment exchanges for the physically handicapped, 17 vocational rehabilitation centres for the physically handicapped and 287 voluntary organizations engaged in leprosy work?

Dr S. K. Noordeen, *WHO Action Programme for the Elimination of Leprosy*, comments on the back cover: 'I congratulate Dr Dharmshaktu for undertaking the very important task of disseminating information on the availability of services for all leprosy patients in India. This will certainly improve the utilization of such services by needy patients and peripheral workers, who are often unaware of their existence.' This Guide is manifestly of great practical value and should be in the hands, of all who contribute to the control of leprosy in India, including those who wish to pursue the concept of teaching increased responsibility and self-care to patients. The price is Rs 190 and copies are available from the address above. All proceeds go to *The Indian Leprosy Foundation* to support eradication.

A. Colin McDougall

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