

Editor's Choice

This issue of *Leprosy Review* is particularly exciting because we have a group of articles focusing on the topical questions of how many leprosy patients are there in the world and what effect has WHO–MDT had on the global numbers of leprosy patients? These are highly topical questions, asked at every leprosy meeting. In the News and Notes section we have reprinted two articles from the WHO *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, 'Progress towards leprosy elimination' and 'Global Cases Trends in Leprosy'. These articles are written from a WHO perspective and emphasize the success of MDT and look for evidence of a decline in numbers of leprosy patients. Accompanying these two articles are two editorials. Cairns Smith emphasizes the importance of measuring the incidence of leprosy on a country by country basis if we are to have a proper understanding of the impact of WHO–MDT and other antileprosy activities on the transmission of disease. Paul Fine also argues for looking carefully at the incidence trends and guides readers through the two reports. He highlights many important issues and I hope that these pieces will be stimulating and generate discussion and correspondence.

The efficacy of MDT was assessed histologically by Ebenezer *et al.* (p. 218) who showed that in a group of 24 clinically and histologically confirmed BT patients 33% had histopathological activity after completion of 6 months WHO PB–MDT. No acid-fast bacilli were seen and this emphasizes the immunological nature of paucibacillary disease.

There are several chemotherapy related items. A mild dapsone-induced haemolytic anaemia is common and Quieroz *et al.* (p. 212) show that slow acetylators are not at greater risk of developing haematological side-effects with dapsone. Many readers will appreciate Dr Michael Waters' informal report on the WHO meeting on chemotherapy research in leprosy in Chennai earlier this year. Notwithstanding the success of WHO–MDT it is important that new drugs should be tested and shorter regimes developed. Waters outlines the current WHO sponsored trials and gives a preliminary analysis of the trial of single dose rifampicin/ofloxacin and minocycline for single lesion paucibacillary patients. The data reported so far are encouraging and we shall be covering this topic in the next issue of *Leprosy Review* when we hope to be reprinting the full trial analysis from 'Leprosy in India.'

Nerve damage and how it is measured is a continuing theme in *Leprosy Review*. A useful letter from Ethiopia (p. 252) reports on a small group of patients who had loss of sensation to 10-g but not 1-g monofilament testing and were not treated with steroids. Of the patients who were followed up only one patient had further loss of sensation. As monofilament testing is being taken up widely it is important that studies should be done evaluating the risks of treating large numbers of patients with steroids against the neurological benefits gained from steroid therapy.

Women with leprosy suffer a double jeopardy. Already often disadvantaged by their gender leprosy will then compromise their position even further. Amanda Le Grand has written a stimulating review looking at the many ways in which being a woman affects the risks and outcome of having leprosy. I hope this will encourage more research and action in this area.

DIANA N. J. LOCKWOOD

Poster Notice and Questionnaire

The last four issues of *Leprosy Review* have included a series of posters covering important areas of management and research in leprosy. These have been distributed free to subscribers and additional copies have been made available from LEPROA. The current issue contains one entitled 'Taking slit-skin smears', and the following issue will have 'Staining slit-skin smears'.

A further series is planned on topics such as 'Care of microscopes' and 'Ocular problems in Leprosy'. In order to ensure that these new posters are both well received *and* utilized, we would like to evaluate the first series of posters. We are therefore enclosing in this issue a very brief questionnaire which will help us to measure the success of the posters. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this to the Editor, *Leprosy Review*. In addition we would also welcome suggestions for future poster topics. Your comments will be most valuable when we are producing/planning further posters.

We would be happy for you to include the questionnaire with the subscription renewal form, and return them to the address given on the subscription form.