

Editor's Choice

Many of you will be reading this copy of *Leprosy Review* at the 15th World Congress of Leprosy. Lepra has generously funded the printing of extra copies so that each delegate to the conference has a copy of *Leprosy Review*, and this edition's accompanying poster in their conference pack. I hope that many of you will be persuaded to take out a subscription to the journal or apply for free copies if you come from a resource poor setting.

As befits a conference edition, we have many interesting articles which will be relevant to the issues being debated at the conference. In the Editorial, Dr Ji expresses his confidence in the new 12-month multidrug regime for multibacillary leprosy. Dr Waters, in an accompanying Commentary, suggests a more cautious analysis of the present. I look forward to the readers' response to these two articles.

The original papers range from laboratory techniques to health services research. A study from Indonesia shows that a weak decolorizer can be used for staining both *M. tuberculosis* and *M. leprae*, which will simplify laboratory work. An Indian group demonstrate that fine needle aspirate can be used to assess both bacterial load and cellular morphology of lesions. The sustainability of leprosy services in the next century is a topical issue that will undoubtedly be discussed at Beijing. Here, two health services research papers look at developing effective strategies for leprosy control and the development of sustainable strategies for sustainable and appropriate leprosy services respectively. For me, the key message from both papers is that participation and involvement of providers and users is necessary if effective change and research findings are to be implemented.

It is a pleasure to be publishing reports from two important WHO sponsored meetings that were held in Addis Ababa earlier this year. The first meeting considered the role of leprosy institutes in the future and produced useful reflections on the ways to provide training and support for national and integrated programmes. The scientists who participated in the second meeting concluded that research in leprosy still has important contributions to make at many levels, from aiding elimination to developing new drugs for treating nerve damage. 95% of the *M. leprae* genome has now been sequenced, and the identification of unique *M. leprae* proteins may yield new and useful insights into the biology of leprosy. The review article by Ian Cree and Cairns Smith reminds us of the gaps in our understanding of the transmission of leprosy and revitalizes the idea that chemoprophylaxis may have a role to play in disease control.

'Further Education' is a new section in the journal. Here, we shall be featuring a series of review articles written by experts but aimed at informing general readers. Surgery for non-surgeons seemed a good place to start, and I am very grateful to Dr Dinkar Palande for undertaking the editorship of this series of five articles that will help those of us who have no surgical expertise to understand what surgeons can do and when we should be referring our patients for a surgical opinion.

We also have bulging Teaching Material and News and Notes Sections; all this seems to testify to the many activities going on in leprosy right now.