

Letter to the Editor

EDITORIALS, SEPTEMBER 1997 BY W. C. S. SMITH, P. FINE & D. K. WARNDORFF

Editor,

Both the Editorials by Drs Smith and Fine raise issues on 'incidence' in leprosy elimination programmes. One of the objectives of leprosy elimination campaigns is to reduce disease burden in the community by detecting backlog cases and treating all active leprosy cases, thus reducing the pool of infection in the community well before the target date. For the leprosy elimination campaign, elimination indicators (direct and indirect) described in the LEM guidelines of WHO should be adequate for assessment of all situations. As the measurement of incidence (with its severe limitations) is operationally not feasible at the moment, we have no alternative but to rely on prevalence and detection indicators. After elimination, we need to work towards leprosy eradication (zero leprosy), for which simple operational and epidemiological technology is still to be developed. At that time, emphasis on incidence will be more relevant. Similarly, zero disability will also have its importance.

I appreciate the concern expressed by Dr Fine and Dr Warndorff regarding the future of fundraising and the support for leprosy activities. There is a justification for reducing the infrastructure for leprosy programmes after achieving the target. However, it is becoming more evident day by day that international donor agencies have started reducing funding and manpower in NGO sectors and started diverting funds for TB programmes. This hasty decision on the part of donor agencies is likely to affect leprosy elimination activities and related research activities.

*Indian Association of Leprologists
Maharashtra Branch
c/o Bombay Leprosy Project
Vidnyan Bhavan
11 V. N. Purav Marg
Sion-Chunabhatti
Bombay-400 022
India*

C. R. REVANKAR