

## Editor's Choice

This issue has a very clear theme of nerve damage and many different ways the ways it can be studied, prevented and hopefully ameliorated. The issue was not specifically planned this way and I think it reflects the determination of the leprosy community to find solutions for the problem of nerve damage.

There are three large epidemiological studies, two from Bangladesh (Croft *et al.*, pp. 140–159; Richardus *et al.*, pp. 160–173) and one from Ethiopia (Meima *et al.*, pp. 189–203). All look at different aspects of nerve damage in new leprosy patients. In both Bangladeshi studies, intensive case finding has resulted in an increased number of female cases being detected. Another positive finding was that the proportion of grade two disability was lower in women than men at the time of diagnosis. The finding that there is a lower case detection rate in women ages 18–30 may reflect socio-cultural rather than biological factors. Multibacillary patients continue to present with high levels of disability, with rates of grade two disability at 18% in Bangladesh and 23% in Ethiopia, respectively. The Ethiopian study looked at risk factors for disability and found that delay in presentation and age were the main risk factors with nearly half the patients having a delay of more than 2 years from symptom onset to registration. The problems of case finding in women and encouraging early registration will clearly be important issues for future leprosy control planning.

The study by Croft *et al.* found that the posterior tibial nerve was the nerve most commonly affected. This finding would not surprise surgeons who see a large burden of morbidity from posterior tibial nerve damage. In our surgical series, ulcer surgery for non-specialist surgeons outlines basic principles to improve foot quality and prevent ulcer recurrence. The poster accompanying this issue, 'Foot Care', is planned as a tie-in with the surgery articles and focuses on ulcer prevention. It is a striking poster and I hope will be used widely in clinics for teaching self care.

Science Commentary is a new section which I hope will attract many readers. In this section, scientists will be writing about new findings and explaining their relevance and excitement for other leprosy workers. Gilla Kaplan and her colleagues have given this section an excellent start with a very clear explanation of the mechanism by which *M. leprae* binds to Schwann cells.

We have had many positive response to our proposed special issue on LECS but many people are asking for more time to prepare articles. So we have decided to postpone the LEC issue until December and will continue to accept articles until Sept 1. I'm sorry that I gave readers such short notice for the LEC issue

The Editorial has been prepared by Irene Allen, the editorial assistant in the Lepra offices. We thought that readers might appreciate a glimpse inside the editorial office.

Diana N.J. Lockwood (Editor)