

CONJUGAL INFECTIONS IN LEPROSY

TO THE EDITOR:

Why are conjugal infections in leprosy so rare? Rogers gives the following figures from 700 cases in which the probable source of infection was traced:

Conjugal	12.14	per cent
Cohabiting	6.14	" "
House, room, bed	39.84	" "
Attending patients	19.87	" "
Close association	19.42	" "

In considering 700 cases at Ngomahuru Leprosy Hospital near Fort Victoria in Southern Rhodesia, my figure for conjugal infections works out at only 1.57 per cent. The first instance, in a period of 15 years, of admission of man and wife together to this hospital occurred only a year ago.

I have just discharged a European patient with three years treatment here, whose wife accompanied him and yet remained free from the disease. In this hospital I definitely recommend that a wife should accompany her husband, and vice versa, for I am a great believer in the psychological treatment of the patient, and conjugal infections are so rare.

An explanation must be found for this scarcity of conjugal infections. I think it probable that a hormone theory will fit the case, and quite possible that an entirely new method of treatment may emerge from administration of sex hormones prepared from leprosy patients. Very little is yet known about hormones, but I suggest that investigations should be made into the sex hormones of leprosy patients, with a view of making use of them in treatment.

Our present methods of treatment with derivatives of the chaulmoogric series of oils is generally very slow and uncertain. Many cases are definitely incurable by such means. Would not male and female hormone preparations hold out a better prospect? I think it quite likely, but have no means here of carrying out research into this unknown subject. I suggest that others more favorably equipped for research might wish to work along these lines.

*Medical Superintendent
Ngomahuru Leprosy Hospital
Southern Rhodesia*

B. MOISER, O.B.E.
*Leprologist to Gov't of
Southern Rhodesia*