

HEREDITY IN SUSCEPTIBILITY

TO THE EDITOR:

In the July-September, 1941, issue of *THE JOURNAL* there appeared an able editorial on the position of "Heredity in susceptibility to leprosy," in which is cited my opinion on the nonhereditary factors, as given in my article published in the *Leprosy Quarterly* of the Chinese Mission to Lepers.

Proponents of the heredity factor, I maintained, lack evidence for their argument. It is clear that *analogy* with tuberculosis is influencing the argument probably more than anything else. Analogy is suggestive of many useful points of attack; as a final argument it is valueless. For those who are thinking of leprosy as analogous to tuberculosis, the following facts are important.

A fair survey of school-children in Shanghai, made by Kao, revealed that the percentage of infected children under the age of 14 (10-14) is about 61. In Peking this figure is even higher, and at the age of 21 they found 100 per cent positive. In one big Chinese institution in Peking, three or four years ago, about 16 new cases of active tuberculosis were developing among its staff annually. After doing away with the common bowl system, and giving one pint of milk and about one ounce of butter per day, this figure dropped to one, and last year there were no cases at all among the staff or students.

Accepting the fact that one may inherit a predisposition to tuberculosis, it is impossible to ignore the above results and others at my disposal which support the importance of sound nutrition in combating disease. I would, therefore, urge all responsible authorities in our leprosaria to pay more attention to the diet, which deserves as great a place in their thinking as the various therapeutic measures undertaken.

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