

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHED WITH THE AID OF THE  
LEONARD WOOD MEMORIAL

Publication Office: School of Medicine, Tulane University,  
1430 Tulane Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Application pending for entry at the Post Office at New Orleans, La.,  
as second-class matter.

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VOL. 16

APRIL-JUNE, 1948

No. 2

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## EDITORIALS

*Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board,  
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### REPORT ON THE HAVANA CONGRESS

The Fifth International Leprosy Congress held in Havana from April 3 to 11 far exceeded the expectations of its sponsors and organizers. The first such gathering to be held in the New World, located in one of the most delightful cities there, officially supported by the Government of Cuba and local authorities with an ample allotment of funds and other facilities, formally but cordially welcomed by the President of the country—himself a medical scientist—and other ranking officials, socially provided with enjoyable occasions in keeping with the traditional hospitality of the host country, it was an event long to be recalled with pleasure and satisfaction by visiting delegates and by those who bore the burden of its organization.

The Congress was notable for both the numbers of official and institutional delegates and members of private status registered and the number of papers presented. It was the largest leprosy meeting ever held, despite the fact that not a few Old World countries represented at previous gatherings sent no delegates, and because of distance or post-war difficulties others had smaller delegations than might have been desired. The situation was more than balanced, numerically, because of the recent marked increase in leprosy work and in the men and women concerned with its problems in the Western Hemisphere.

It will be recalled that, at the Cairo Congress held in 1938, the International Leprosy Association received and accepted an

official proposal that the next one should be held in Paris in 1943. That year passed with no such meeting. At the next large gathering of leprologists, the Second Pan-American Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in October 1946, the representation of the Association there received, through Dr. Alberto Oteiza Setién, an official invitation from the Government of Cuba to hold the postponed Congress in Havana early in 1948. That invitation was accepted, and in due course preparation got under way.

Since it will be recalled that, though there had been three international leprosy *conferences*, (at Berlin in 1897, in Bergen in 1908, and in Strasbourg in 1923), the organizing authorities of the Cairo meeting chose, for reasons that seemed adequate to them, to call that one the first *congress*. About the designation of the Havana meeting as the Fifth Congress, the organizing group decided to adopt the term "Congress" and to call it the fifth one to take into account all of the previous general international events dealing especially with leprosy.

For the headquarters of the Congress the Mayor of Havana had loaned and renovated the Escuela Municipal Valdes Rodriguez, an institution for poor boys some 200 of whom normally reside there. A large, three-storied building within the city limits, with a large auditorium and numerous rooms which ordinarily serve as offices and classrooms, it proved excellently adapted for the purpose. Rooms were set aside for the necessary offices, including one for the International Leprosy Association, and for committee work; two were devoted to the scientific exhibits, one to a branch post-office—where the special two-cent Congress postage stamp was sold—and a telegraph office, and one for the Press. A large room, normally the gymnasium, was devoted to the commercial exhibits, which were interesting. A typist pool and multigraphing department proved to be valuable aid to the work of the Congress and its committees. Two exceptional facilities were the dining room, where three meals a day were served at very low prices for high-cost Havana, and dormitories for the use of which no charge was made; though only about 20 reservations had been requested, the 50 beds prepared were all taken and some late-comers could not be accommodated.

An exceptionally helpful feature of the setup was the simultaneous-interpretation equipment of the auditorium. By means of portable receiving sets, one of which was supplied to each auditor, the speakers and the presiding officer could be listened to by radio broadcast either in the original language or as

rendered by interpreters. The English, Spanish and French languages were handled fairly well—except when speakers talked too rapidly or inaudibly—but no interpreters for Portuguese could be found, which handicapped those who spoke in that language. The fact that only the auditorium was so equipped made it necessary to abandon a plan to divide some of the sessions into two sections and consequently to reduce the number of papers to be actually read, a change which involved some difficulties and dissatisfaction on the part of a few members.

The first important feature of the Congress was the formal opening, held on Sunday evening, April 4th, in the Chamber of the House of Representatives in the Capitol building and presided over by the President of the Republic, Dr Ramon Grau San Martin. The inaugural, organizing session took place the next morning, and after its adjournment the gathering continued as the first of the scientific sessions. Altogether there were nine such sessions, a total of 23 hours being thus devoted to the reading of papers and discussions. The session programs included a total of 105 papers, all written by or in collaboration with members present. Though the time allowed for each paper had been reduced from 15 to 10 minutes, because of which some could be presented only in summary fashion and others were abandoned entirely in favor of lantern-slide demonstrations, the periods for discussion were still unfortunately limited.

Review of the records after adjournment revealed that 196 papers or titles had been submitted, all of which—provided the manuscripts are all turned in—will appear in the *Memoires*. By agreement, selected papers will be published in the *JOURNAL*; all of those in the present issue are of this category, and others will appear in subsequent issues. All papers and titles submitted are dealt with in the Current Literature section of this issue, classified as well as can be done under the circumstances. It may be noted that, besides the 105 items included in the program, there were 51 “read by title,” the author or one of the authors present; another 40 items came from persons who did not attend. At the Cairo Congress [*THE JOURNAL* 6 (1938) 384] a total of 160 titles was submitted and 67 papers were read, 38 less than were included in the program of the recent meeting; no less than 77 titles, almost one-half, were from absentees.

Of the subjects treated, by far the largest number of titles dealt with modern chemotherapy. No less than 31 have been classified in the “sulfone therapy” group, and others dealt with the subject either comparatively as regards chaulmoogra therapy

or otherwise. Exponents of the latter drug were relatively few, though several papers point out that it is of value if properly used or that it would be unwise—or for practical reasons impossible—to abandon it entirely. Classification of leprosy, the second most lively topic, was the subject of 10 papers submitted although only three appeared on the actual program; most of those present who were especially interested in the matter reserved their efforts for the Committee which dealt with it. The largest single group submitted (38) and actually presented (22) falls under the general heading of Distribution, Epidemiology and Control. Immunology, with reference to the lepromin reaction in man—leprosy and nonleprosy—and in animals was also the subject of a considerable number of reports.

Unique to the leprosy congresses was a feature of the Scientific Exhibits department. Besides the usual still exhibits, consisting mainly of photographs and publications, there were during the entire week active demonstrations of scientific equipment. Mr. Ralph Creer and Mrs. Cora Turney Burgess, of the Leonard Wood Memorial Committee on Photography, demonstrated selected equipment recommended for medical photographers and examples of what may be done in the illustration of leprosy lesions. One special discussion period was held, attended by numerous workers especially interested in the subject. At the same time Dr. Oscar W. Richards, Chief Biologist of the American Optical Company, demonstrated the new phase microscope to about one hundred persons, using material obtained from leprosy patients. During one period Dr. Robert A. Hingson, of the U. S. P. H. S. exhibited the Hypospray injection apparatus and its use, and later at the San Lazaro Hospital he demonstrated on patients its employment with procain hydrochloride in the relief of acute ulnar neuritis.

As was the case at Cairo, a great deal of interest and effort applied to the work of the technical committees. The time available for that work, some of it overlapping the scientific sessions, did not permit them or the Editorial Committee to prepare carefully finished reports for submission to the final plenary session. As adopted by the Congress at that session, in certain instances with more or less modification, and finally edited and translated, these reports are published in this issue as resolutions of the Congress.

Only general comment on these resolutions is possible, or proper, at this time. It may be said, however, that the one on therapy is somewhat more conservative, at least regarding the

ultimate value of the sulfones, than was the tenor of most papers on the subject read in the sessions. On the other hand the views of workers in large leprosy areas where chaulmoogra is still believed to be of value, and where it would be impossible under existing circumstances to adopt sulfones for routine treatment, have more prominence than is indicated by the sessions program. Notable is the lack of specific guidance with regard to the laboratory control which should be exercised in sulfone therapy, a point brought out by one of the speakers in the discussion.

The Classification Committee—of whose work the writer can speak with personal knowledge—dealt with the most controversial subject and started with a seemingly hopeless division between the two schools of thought. An overwhelming proportion of the members supported the South American formula; only a minority group was in favor of the classical system, last treated at Cairo, as the basis of classification—and they were by no means in accord as to details. In both groups, however, there prevailed a sincere desire to end the existing schism and to arrive at a formula which might be tried out by all until the next Congress. The final product, decidedly a compromise but a conscientious effort, was unsatisfactory to some members of the committee, and the Congress as a whole was far less satisfied. Only the first section of the report, which names and defines the two types and the subordinate group, was adopted. Some speakers regarded that as a material advance, but how useful it will prove to leprosy workers as a whole remains to be seen. This matter will be discussed more fully and from a different point of view in the next issue, and for the information of those who were not at Havana the discarded part of the committee's report will be published.

The Epidemiology committee, it is understood, was divided into groups to prepare different sections of its report, and one of these sections was turned over to the Editorial Committee in Portuguese. The report is of somewhat broader scope and decidedly more detailed than were those put forth by the Manila, Cairo and Rio de Janeiro meetings, and the influence of conditions and practices in South American countries is apparent.

The reports of the other two committees, on social welfare and on the use of words "leper" and "leprosy," were adopted unchanged and speak for themselves. Hereafter the JOURNAL will follow the editorial policy of avoiding so far as possible the use of the word "leper" except in direct quotations or in the official names of organizations or institutions.

It is desired to express appreciation of the active cooperation given and special facilities provided by Dr. Alberto Oteza Setién and Dr. Ismael Ferrer, respectively President and Secretary of the Congress, which permitted the Editor to collect during a period of eleven days following its close the materials and data which appear in this issue and will appear in later ones. Drs. Francisco Tiant, Luis Rodriguez Plasencia, and others gave material aid in translation work and otherwise.

—W. A. WADE.