

## BOOK REVIEW

The **Diagnosis of Leprosy** by FREDERICK A. JOHANSEN, PAUL T. ERICKSON and SISTER HILARY ROSS, *U. S. Marine Hospital (National Leprosarium), Carville, La.* Supplement to *Tropical Medicine News*, 1949, 24 pp. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda 14, Maryland.

This pamphlet was written at the request of the American Society of Tropical Medicine to aid physicians in making an early diagnosis in leprosy. It presents concisely much information under the four headings of epidemiology, clinical features, differential diagnosis, and laboratory diagnosis. Its scope does not comprise therapy and other topics which would be required for a general manual. While there would be no point in making a detailed, critical analysis of such a presentation not intended to prepare leprosy specialists, nevertheless a few points may be noted.

It is pointed out that although the disease is not common in continental United States, cases of endemic origin occurring regularly in three states only (Louisiana, Texas and Florida) and infrequently in California and a few others, its characteristics are such that it is an important health problem in the endemic areas, with problems far out of proportion to the numbers of cases. For this reason, and also so that the full benefit of treatment may be obtained, there is urgent need for early discovery and diagnosis, and to that end the great barrier of the "low index of suspicion" of leprosy on the part of practicing physicians must be broken down.

Regarding transmission, the authors hold economic status and the standard of living to be especially important factors, more so than any other in determining the present geographical distribution of the disease in the United States. The view that children below the age of puberty are in general the most susceptible is accepted. However, the earliest cutaneous lesion described is the macule, nothing being said of the—usually tuberculoid—little papule or small nodule found by workers in the Philippines, Brazil and elsewhere to be the earliest lesions in very young children.

The classification used is the South American one but in its earlier form, with three types including the "uncharacteristic" one; recognition is not given the decision of the Havana congress, in 1948, that the various kinds of cases so designated should constitute a "group" rather than a "type" and should be called "indeterminate." The form which the disease assumes is determined by "the extent of tissue reaction," it is stated. Where the tissues are capable of strong defense against the activity of the bacilli the benign or tuberculoid type results; when no defense is evident the malignant or lepromatous type results; when tissue reaction is slight, the uncharacteristic lesions are produced. To speculate on the basis of the differences in tissue reaction would obviously be out of place in such a presentation.

The section of differential diagnosis, in which special emphasis is laid on the frequency with which cases ultimately sent to Carville were diagnosed as syphilis, and often treated for it over inexcusably long periods despite lack of benefit, is especially good. That on laboratory diagnosis is comprehensive except that, although the lepromin test is included, the histamine one is not; but it is mentioned elsewhere.

This publication is admirable for its purpose and should be distributed widely.

—H. W. WADE