

## "SYMPOSIA BY CORRESPONDENCE"

In this department of the third issue last year (17 (1949) 308) we discussed the "symposia by correspondence" which have appeared from time to time since THE JOURNAL was initiated, the purpose being to determine reader interest in this feature. A card designed to facilitate the registering of opinions was sent out later.

To the time of writing of the present note (late in August) a total of 84 cards has been received, from 25 different countries or territories, and a trickle of them is still coming in. This number is not large as compared with the total membership list of the International Leprosy Association. However, such inquiries, made so impersonally are never expected to elicit a high proportion of responses, and those who have responded represent a relatively large proportion of active leprosy workers as well as numerous others. Not less than 95 per cent of those who responded favor continuation of the feature, not a few of them

emphatically; and they include all of the Associate Editors and also all of the Contributing Editors group from whom we have heard. The votation is therefore regarded as affirmative.

The card sent out provided not only for a statement as to whether the recipient did or did not find the symposia of interest, but also as to whether he or she would or would not be willing to contribute to them in the future. The responses are as follows:

1. *Interested and willing to contribute:* These total 65 of the 84 persons expressing opinions (77 per cent). Several of these people are associate members of the International Leprosy Association, concerned primarily with the social aspects of leprosy.

2. *Interested but not able to contribute:* These total 15 persons (18 per cent). Of this group, four are associate members of the Association, two of them Sisters of Charity and two others concerned only with the "lay" side of leprosy work; three were previously in or associated with leprosy work but are now retired or in other work; two are newcomers avowedly not yet prepared to contribute; while of the other six none save perhaps one is known (by us) to be connected with leprosy work.

3. *Not interested:* Only 4 persons (5 per cent) gave this response. One of them, not in leprosy work, expressed doubt rather than definite disinterest; two are associate members of the Association; one was once in leprosy work, and if he is still connected with it he stands unique in his position among those who responded.

Several of those who responded to the inquiry suggested topics for future symposia, as follows:

(1) The experience of leprologists in various parts of the world regarding the use of sulfones in tuberculoid and neural types of leprosy.

(2) The management of sulfone therapy during erythema nodosum reactions or lepra reactions. (These two items by Dr. Paul T. Erickson, of Carville, La.)

(3) The effect of the sulfones on the infectivity of leprosy and its relationship to the isolation of cases. (By Dr. P. D. Winter, Pretoria, South Africa.)

(4) The changes of the lepromin reaction under treatment with the sulfones and other drugs. (By Dr. Arturo M. Mom, Buenos Aires, Argentina.)

(5) The interpretation of nasal smears. Are nonpathogenic acid-fast bacilli morphologically indistinguishable from *M. leprae* found in such smears, and if so how are they to be identified as saprophytic? Is it justified to make a diagnosis of leprosy on the basis of positive nasal smears alone, in the absence of other positive evidence? Can leprosy be excluded on the basis of negative nasal smears? Might it be agreed that nasal smears be restricted to the examination of candidates for release from isolation, and that negative smears should be a condition of such release?

(6) The rigidity of the bacteriologic criteria for release from isolation. (These two by Dr. Harry L. Arnold, Jr., Honolulu, Hawaii.)

(7) The orthopedic care of patients, including tropic ulcers.

(8) The degree of protection required to prevent transmission.

(9) The education of doctors and others. (These three by Dr. Norman R. Sloan, until recently at Kalaupapa, Hawaii.)

(10) The attitude which should be taken toward schoolteachers or students with the tuberculoid or indeterminate forms of leprosy, it being understood that those with the lepromatous form should, without any possible discussion, be denied place in the schools. (By Dr. E. Montestruc, Fort de France, Martinique.)

(11) The infectiousness of neural cases in reaction. (Dr. M. B. Diwan, Nalwadi, Wardha, Madhyapradesh, India.)

(12) Is leprosy really a contagious disease? (By Raul F. de Mesquita, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.)

Various comments were volunteered by several of those who responded, encouraging with respect to the symposium system or to THE JOURNAL as a whole. To quote only one about symposia, a senior officer of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (Dr. Murdock), voting affirmatively, said that that opinion is also "that of other members of the staff of the Bureau." One writer (Dr. Muir) thought that the questionnaire card method is one which might be developed further. Three writers offered suggestions for improving the periodical: (1) That an English summary should follow each article in French or Spanish (by Dr. Herman H. Gray, Atlanta, Ga.). It is agreed that this should be done, and it should be practicable to do it. (2) That articles in English should be provided with Spanish summaries (by Dr. Javier Guillén Pratts, Valencia, Spain). This also should be done, but its accomplishment will depend upon whether or not arrangements can be made to obtain suitable translations without undue expense. (3) An interesting suggestion (by Dr. Gray) is that pictures with short notes about the members of the editorial groups would be of interest to the younger workers who do not know them. There being some uncertainty about the practicability of this idea, opinions are invited.

The encouraging willingness of so many persons to contribute to symposia raises a question of procedure. It would be quite impracticable for us to submit, directly and specifically, every question to be dealt with to everyone who has expressed willingness to cooperate in this way. Furthermore, the varying nature of the different questions raised will not appeal to everyone alike. We therefore contemplate giving, in this department, advance notice of each symposium to be undertaken and in so doing to invite contributions from all who may wish to offer them.

*At this time the following two questions are asked:* (1) Which of the suggested topics, listed above, would be of most interest for future symposia, and in what order should they be taken up? (2) What topics other than those in the above list

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should be dealt with in that fashion? *Interested readers are invited to respond without further approach.*

—H. W. Wade