

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHED WITH THE AID OF THE
LEONARD WOOD MEMORIAL

Publication Office: 1832 M St., N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

Entered at the Post Office at New Orleans as second-class matter.

VOLUME 26, No. 4

OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1958

EDITORIALS

Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board, and opinions expressed are those of the writers.

REPORT ON THE TOKYO CONGRESS

The Seventh International Congress of Leprology—the name in accord with that adopted for the preceding congress held in Madrid in 1953—was held in Tokyo from November 12th to 19th, 1958, registration beginning one day earlier. It should be said at the outset that it was highly successful, in spite of circumstances that had made not a few people dubious. Furthermore, in more than one respect it was unique among our leprosy congresses.

In the first place, the local host body which co-sponsored the affair together with the International Leprosy Association, being entirely responsible for local arrangements, was not the Government of Japan but a private organization, the Tofu Kyokai, or Japanese Leprosy Foundation, from which derived all funds that were expended. The patron was H.I.H. Prince Takamatsu, who stands in the same relationship to the Tofu Kyokai. In the preparatory work the Japanese Leprosy Association collaborated closely with that organization.

The place of the meetings, the Sankei International Conference Hall, is a modern lay-out built especially for such gatherings and consequently the best our leprosy congresses has known. The provisions for simultaneous translation are in-built, with sound-proof booths high along the sides of the hall from which the interpreters could see all that was going on. The auditorium was larger than was really needed, if certain of the other facilities were a bit on the short side (referring to committee rooms and lounge, but not to offices and exhibit rooms).

Of the 181 persons who registered as full members (apart from the ladies who were associate members) a full three-fourths came from abroad. For the first time the local members were fewer than the usual 35 per

cent of the total—this not considering a considerable number of Japanese physicians who were allowed to attend the sessions as observers without registration.

As for the scientific program, which—once the host of the congress is selected—is the main responsibility of the International Leprosy Association, there were several unique features. Some time previously the Association had set up Interim Panels, one for each of the main topics proposed for the agenda, and these panels were responsible for the six “symposium” sessions of the program, which were confined to “invited” papers arranged for by the respective chairmen. The panels had been asked to be prepared to make recommendations for any changes of the technical resolutions of the Madrid congress that seemed indicated by further experience, and the members of those panels who were present constituted the cores of the corresponding technical committees created by the congress. Finally, the chairmen of the panels were asked by the Association secretary to make recommendations regarding the acceptability of voluntarily “proffered” papers, based on the abstracts submitted.

For the first time, the day-by-day program was prepared and mimeographed in time to be distributed as the members registered, so nobody was uncertain as to when he was to read a paper—and what paper. Because of this, and because the Organizing Committee had not programmed any distracting events, the sessions were well attended and only one paper of the program which might have been read had to be passed over because of absence of the author. To achieve this end the senior officers of the Association (together with Dr. Ross Innes who served as a deputy secretary) arrived in Tokyo some time before the Congress opened. No less than 120 abstracts had been submitted in time to be printed, and selection was necessary. The officers of the Japanese Leprosy Association had screened the offerings of their colleagues, deliberately limiting them to twelve in order to leave ample time on the program for foreign visitors, and that was most helpful—even if it may have caused some unhappiness among persons affected. When an author known to be coming had sent in abstracts of two or more papers, one was arbitrarily chosen to be read. Thus was avoided the last-minute confusion that heretofore had resulted from waiting until the authors could be given their own choice. If there was any dissatisfaction on that score, it was not voiced. The total number of papers read, as represented in the abstract section of this issue, was 78.

It is difficult to select, without being unfair to other work, the more outstanding features of the reports presented in the sessions. However, a few notes may be made.

There is interest in the highly technical efforts that are being made to understand the fundamental requirements that must be met before the more refractory mycobacteria (*M. leprae* and *M. leprae murium*) can be cultivated *in vitro*, even in tissue cultures. More encouraging for an

actual break-through were two reports of the production of histiocytic granulomata, more or less loaded with noncultivable mycobacteria, as a result of inoculation of certain animals with suspensions of lepromas, these lesions of very slow development.

In the field of immunology, the view that lepromin is an antigen which modifies the immunologic status of the tested individual ("microvaccination"), and not a mere test reagent as tuberculin is, seems to be gaining recognition. Individuals negative on first test may be made positive reactors as a result of repeated testing.

In therapy, the sulfones (and especially DDS, inexpensive and effective even when given in spaced dosage) retain their preeminence, but there is much interest in certain new drugs especially for cases which do not tolerate or fail to do well on sulfones. Outstanding in this group, possibly because longest tested, is the thiourea called Ciba 1906. There was only one report, and that a minor one, on the use of the marianum antigen in therapy.

There was no outstanding report, although an impressive total, in the field of epidemiology and control, where the point of view has been changing in recent years. There were only two reports, both favorable but neither beyond criticism by the statistician, on the protective effect of BCG vaccination.

The contributions regarding social aspects were in keeping with the modern spirit of this era.

Regarding the work of the technical committees, the hope that their meetings could be so timed that they would not draw people from the scientific sessions was not entirely realized. It is to be hoped that at the next congress, with more experience with the operation of the Association's Interim Panels (and, perhaps, more time for their operation) they may be sufficiently well prepared so that less time need be spent by the technical committees.

As for their reports, all were newly-written statements except that of the Committee on Classification, which had to admit inability to make progress because of divergent views. Its report, only, remains in the form of a report to the Congress; the others readily became acts (recommendations) of the Congress itself.

No attempt will be made here to review the high lights of those documents, but attention may be drawn to the modern views of control measures reflected in the one on Epidemiology and Control—and the absence of enthusiasm over BCG vaccination that was so conspicuous five years ago. Interest in measures for prevention of deformities, and for rehabilitation, has increased—more, it must be said, than actual organized activities in that important field.

The highest credit must go to the Organizing Committee for a remarkable job of preparing for the Congress in a very short time, quite apart from the excellence

of the mechanics of operation after the meeting started. It will be recalled that in 1948 the Government of India extended to the ILA an invitation for the 1953 congress, and that when that meeting was held in Madrid it renewed the invitation for 1958. With Dr. Dharmendra serving as executive secretary the preparations had gone far (and in close agreement with the ILA, the president of which had visited India for conferences in December 1957), when the Indian government decided, in view of certain developments, that it would have to withdraw its invitation.

When that happened thoughts turned to Japan. At Madrid the Japanese government had extended an invitation for the 1958 congress, but, when it was learned that India had priority, its representatives announced that they would make a bid for 1963. When asked in June if they could take over earlier than that, they responded with the unexpected proposal to have it at the time that it had planned for India, November. The spade-work that had been done by Dr. Dharmendra helped them greatly, but nevertheless their accomplishment in the short time at their disposal was a remarkable one. An adequate credit list cannot be given here, but the outstanding figures included Dr. K. Hamano, managing director of the Tofu Kyokai, a most capable executive; Dr. K. Kitamura, chairman of the Organizing Committee and very active; and Mr. A. Saita, Chief Liaison Officer, International Affairs, Ministry of Health, who among other things was mainly responsible for the fluent English of the announcements and individual letters that went out to correspondents.

Of the greatest help to the representatives of the ILA was the fact that the Tofu Kyokai had engaged for the duration (extending until the end of November), to work in the office, two young people who had studied abroad and had fluent English, Mr. Yo Yuasa and Miss Sayoko Nakamura. They also served in the interpreters' booths during the sessions.

A most important contribution to the preparation for and operation of the Congress was made by the World Health Organization, which sent early for the purpose certain personnel whom they would need for their own Inter-Regional Leprosy Conference which it was to hold immediately afterward. Mr. J. P. Schellenberg, interpreter, arrived just from the Manila office and started revolutionary activities to shorten papers for the ten-minute limit and prepare copies for the interpreters. He and Mr. Eric Simha, an interpreter from the Geneva headquarters, worked through all of the sessions, as well as several people from Tokyo, with the result that the simultaneous translation was excellent. Miss M. McGregor, also of the Manila office, took charge of the clerical office for transcribing and mimeographing, with highly successful results.

The quinquennial regular meeting of the International Leprosy Association is not discussed here, although of highest importance with respect to *THE JOURNAL*. The reader is referred to the minutes, which appear in this issue.

—H. W. WADE