

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been very interested by the letter of Dr. Feldman, who disagrees with my opinion that the sulfones are more effective against leprosy than against tuberculosis. [See editorial in this issue.]

It is an established fact that the sulfones have a certain bacteriostatic action on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis in vitro* and *in vivo*, as was first shown by Rist and associates in the late 1930's. It was this action which led the phthisiologists and the leprologists to experiment with the sulfone substances in tuberculosis and leprosy in man.

But, while Faget, at Carville, obtained spectacular results in leprosy, the phthisiologists did not obtain great benefit from the administration of the sulfones to their patients.

Obviously, lacking cultures and susceptible animals, it has been impossible for leprologists to confirm experimentally the action of the sulfones on *M. leprae*. Nevertheless, the fact that the effect of these sulfones on the lesions of leprosy is great, while that action on the tuberculous lesions is slight, justifies, to my mind, the opinion that *M. leprae* is more sensitive to the sulfones than *M. tuberculosis*. That is the only test which we have at our disposal to permit such a conclusion.

Furthermore, everyone agrees that this action is bacteriostatic and not bactericidal. Thus is explained why the administration of sulfones for prophylactic purposes after vaccination with BCG, until the appearance of a state of resistance which will be evidenced by the Mitsuda reaction, does not prevent the development of that state of resistance—which is provoked, it is not to be forgotten, by the presence in the organism of tubercle bacilli which are not virulent *but are living*. I have insisted on this bacteriostatic action, and also on the lesser action of the sulfone on the tubercle bacillus than on the leprosy bacillus.

It is a fact that young, lepromin-negative subjects who are vaccinated with BCG and receive a sulfone as a preventive measure, become lepromin positive like other subjects who are not given the sulfone.

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