

TREATMENT OF LEPROSY WITH ANTITHYROID DRUGS

TO THE EDITOR:

This is in further consideration of the treatment of leprosy with antithyroid substances, with particular reference to the use of Tapazole, on which I reported some time ago (1). At that time I wrote "Extensive use of various antithyroid preparations during nearly eight years, in a total of 236 leprosy cases, may open a new road for the treatment of that disease." Representative cases treated with different doses of the thyroid-depressant drug Tapazole (methimazole), in which notable improvement occurred, were presented.

Recently Davison (2) after a pilot study of the effect of Tapazole in three groups of 20 lepromatous patients, reported that the drug had not proved of special benefit. I would like to raise certain objections to the conclusion presented: (1) Tapazole was suspended for two months during a total of 14 months of treatment; (2) too small a dose

of the drug was used; and (3) insufficient emphasis was placed on the reduced incidence of severe leprosy reaction and acute edema of hands and feet in Tapazole patients.

It appears to me that further trials are desirable, with higher dosage and continuous maintenance of Tapazole. I believe parallel investigation is needed on the concentration of lipids in leprosy patients, with quantitative determination of the amount of iodine in tissues, for which standard methods are available (³).

Confirmation of a high concentration of iodine in the skin in leprosy would support the use of higher doses of antithyroid compounds such as Tapazole. Since this drug is readily soluble and is absorbed well percutaneously, experimental use by inunction is possible.

In my patients I have used 90-400 mgm. daily. At present more than 20 patients are receiving a daily dosage of 100 mgm.

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REFERENCES

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2. DAVISON, A. R. A pilot study of Tapazole. *Internat. J. Leprosy* **31** (1963) 9-13.
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