

Disability Index for Leprosy Patients¹

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To compare the severity of disabilities in a group of leprosy cases in different areas of the same country, or in different countries or continents, the authors have proposed a disability index. In the same area it could also give an indication concerning the efficacy of case finding and/or the pattern of disabilities in different periods of time. Furthermore, a disability index would make easier the establishment of priorities in the prevention and treatment of disabilities. Brand, Bechelli and Martinez's classification of disabilities, prepared in WHO, was adopted as a base for such an index.

I. Disability Index—DI(1)—related to the maximum degree of disabilities: the 6 values indicated at the bottom of the form (classification mentioned above) in maximum grade for hand, foot and eye, left and right side, are added and then divided by 6. This is the simplest index and could be used by auxiliaries with limited training. The minimum value for DI (1) is 0.17 (only anesthesia in one hand or foot or only conjunctivitis in one eye) and the maximum value 3.

II. Disability Index—DI (2)—in relation to all recorded disabilities: disabilities indicated in the form for hand, foot and eye are given value 1 when of grade 1, 2 for each disability of grade 2, and 3 for each disability of grade 3. The values will be added and divided by 6. The minimum and maximum DI would be respectively 0.17 and 10.3.

III. A third index—DI (3)—would be proposed and it would also be related to the maximum of disability as DI (1). The maximum grade 1 would have the value 1, the maximum grade 2 the value 3, and the maximum grade 3 the value 6. The values of the maximum grades would be added and divided by 6. The minimum value for DI (3) would be 0.17, as for DI (1) and DI (2), the maximum 6.

Involvement of larynx, collapse of nose and/or facial paralysis could also be considered in establishing DI (1), DI (2) and DI (3). These three different types of DI are proposed for an option. The degree of training of the staff, the objectives of the projects, resources and other factors, should be taken into account for the choice of the DI. The DI, like other indices, has its limitations, but it serves a practical purpose and need, which is its main objective.

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