

## BCG Vaccination of Children Against Leprosy

### Preliminary Findings of the WHO-Controlled Trial in Burma Up to January 1970<sup>1</sup>

L. M. Bechelli,<sup>2</sup> P. Gallego Garbajosa,<sup>2</sup> Mg Mg Gyi,<sup>3</sup> K. Uemura<sup>2</sup>, V. Engler,<sup>2</sup>  
V. Martinez Dominguez,<sup>2</sup> T. Sundaresan,<sup>2</sup> R. Quagliato<sup>4</sup> and M. Matejka<sup>2</sup>

The trial started at the end of August 1964 and the preliminary findings up to the end of January 1970 relate to four annual reexaminations and part of the fifth follow-up. The total population examined numbered 73,724 persons, and 27,579 children were included in the trial. A total of 203 cases have been observed so far in the BCG group, as against 236 cases in the control group. The incidence of leprosy among children with tuberculin reactions measuring 0-9 mm. for any of the three age groups is a little higher in the control group. The differences, however, are not substantial and not of public health importance. A similar pattern is observed when the data

are analyzed by household contact status. The proportion of T, Tr, I and I-T? cases is similar in both trial groups. With regard to the lepromin test in new cases in the trial, the observation, especially of children aged 0-4 years, is based on rather small numbers. Nevertheless, stronger reactions (3+) are obtained among BCG vaccinated children; the difference appears to be higher at age group 0-4 years and smaller at 5-9 and 10-14 years. These findings suggest that better results with BCG vaccination might be obtained in children 0-4 years old, and perhaps even better in newborns. Findings in the following years could bring an answer to this point, and also determine if, in the course of each annual follow-up, a lower significant incidence rate may occur in the BCG-vaccinated group.

Thus far, from the material studied, it appears that under the conditions prevailing in Singu township, no significant effect of BCG can be seen within a period of five years and five months. The trial should continue until the end of 1974.

<sup>1</sup> WHO is highly indebted to the Government of Burma and the national team working with the WHO staff. We are grateful for the valuable cooperation of Drs. Mahler, Guld and Piot, and Mr. Dixon.

<sup>2</sup> WHO, Leprosy Health Statistical Methodology Units.

<sup>3</sup> Medical Officers and National Counterpart, WHO Leprosy BCG Trial, Burma.

<sup>4</sup> Short-term Consultant and Independent Observer, Leprosy BCG Trial, Burma.