

Lepromin Nomenclature

TO THE EDITOR:

The availability of *Mycobacterium leprae*-infected armadillo tissue has prompted several field studies to assess the suitability of armadillo-derived lepromin as a substitute for classic lepromin derived from human tissues. For more than a year, we have been conducting such a study in cooperation with Gulf South Research Institute (New Iberia, Louisiana), the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (Washington, D.C.), and the Institut Medical Evangelique (Kimpese, Zaire). To distinguish lepromins of human and armadillo origin we designated them, respectively, lepromin-H and lepromin-A. In THE STAR (34:13, Sept.-Oct. 1974), I note that in a WHO-sponsored study, the terms "armadin" and "tatuin" have been suggested for lepromin of armadillo origin. Although the terms "armadin" and "tatuin" give tribute to two languages—Spanish and the Gurani Indian language, respectively—of the native land of the armadillo, neither term seems to me appropriate.

The term "lepromin" has been in use for nearly a half century, and it and derived words such as "leprolin" bear an established connotation to leprosy workers of virtually all nationalities. The words "lepromin," "leprosy" and "*M. leprae*" are etymologically related and clearly express an association among the names for the skin testing reagent, the disease, the specific etiologic agent, and component of the skin test reagent provoking the specific skin reaction. The proposed terms "armadin" or "tatuin" are in no way etymologically related to "leprosy" or to the specific nature of the skin testing reagent prepared from *M. leprae* infected armadillos. We have noted skin reactions in man to extracts of normal armadillo tissues, and find the terms "armadin" or "tatuin" more appropriate, but

perhaps unnecessary for preparations of such normal tissues.

Skin test reagents have now been prepared from the *M. leprae*-infected mouse (1,3) and chipmunk (2) in addition to the armadillo. The terminology for all the possible future sources of lepromin could prove confusing indeed, if a source-oriented rather than specificity-oriented term is chosen in each instance.

Using the various lepromins studied thus far as examples, I suggest that a nomenclature based on the following designations be considered:

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| Human | - | lepromin-H |
| Armadillo | - | lepromin-A |
| Mouse | - | lepromin-M |
| Chipmunk | - | lepromin-C |

These designations could be understood to refer to "integral" lepromin preparations of the Mitsuda-Hayashi-Wade type. If other antigens, such as the Dharmendra type, are to be considered, notations such as H-D or A-D may be employed. The term "leprolin" could be substituted for "lepromin" where applicable.

Wayne M. Meyers, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor of Pathology

ALM Leprosy Atelier

Department of Pathology

University of Hawaii School of Medicine

REFERENCES

1. DRAPER, P., REES, R. J. W. and WATERS, M. F. R. Comparison in man of lepromins prepared from leprosy infections in man and mice. *Clin. Exp. Immunol.* 3 (1968) 809-816.
2. LEW, J., YANG, Y. T. and PYUN, W. S. Experimental infection of the Korean chipmunk (*Tamias sibiricus asiaticus*, Gmelin) with *M. leprae*. *Int. J. Lepr.* 42 (1974) 193-202.
3. SHEPARD, C. C. Leprosy bacilli in mouse foot pads. *In: The Pathogenesis of Leprosy.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963, pp 80-88.