

## Comments From A Contributing Investigator

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for requesting me to put on my investigator's cap and comment on the letter by Dr. Prabhakaran since Dr. Kato in his reply refers to our experience.

At the time of our initial isolation of alleged cultures of *M. leprae*, the DOPA test, as delineated by Prabhakaran, was widely accepted as virtually positive for the identification of *M. leprae*. We, accordingly, were initially delighted on finding that our cultures were DOPA positive when the determination was made strictly according to Prabhakaran's published methods and utilizing the materials prescribed by him. If this test were specific for *M. leprae* then our cultures were *M. leprae* and it was to our advantage to believe that this was so and to be certain that we were in accord with his published methods. "Unfortunately," however, we ran some controls by the same procedures and found that other mycobacteria when placed or grown in our culture medium, including *M. lepraemurium*, gave positive results as did also our medium alone.

As a result of these findings, we engaged in a more extended investigation of the alleged DOPA identification reaction and regretfully concluded that we could not accept it as evidence for the identity of *M. leprae*. We have not yet published the results of our study, first wishing to obtain confirmation in this important matter since we were certain that our associated allega-

tion of the cultivation of *M. leprae* would be controversial and we did not wish the two issues to becloud each other. Because of his long interest in and experience with hyaluronic acid and because of the biochemical expertise of his laboratory, we presented our findings to Dr. Kato. He decided the matter was of sufficient import to make an independent study of it. The results were presented in this JOURNAL (44 [1976] 435-442), this being the publication that Dr. Prabhakaran is protesting.

Our study, long in manuscript and undergoing some salubrious editorial changes, supports the published findings of Dr. Kato and his associates and our view, as investigators, coincides with that expressed in Dr. Kato's response to Dr. Prabhakaran's communication.

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*(The above communications represent the views of the contributing investigators. They do not in any way indicate editorial policy and should not be construed as indicating that the pages of this JOURNAL are closed to this subject. They are not. Contributions to either the correspondence or manuscript pages will be considered as usual and abstracts of work on the problem as published elsewhere will be published as they come to our attention.—Editor)*