Nutrition and Leprosy

To The Editor:

The editorial "Effect of Malnutrition on Leprosy" (IJL **44** [1976] 374) contains this statement: "There is, it is true, no evidence that any specific or group of dietary substance is promotive of leprous inflammation . . . ." Likewise, the following statement is quoted in an editorial appearing elsewhere (Lepr. Rev. **46** [1975] 5): "No direct link between malnutrition and leprosy has been convincingly demonstrated."

These statements are not true. Bergel, in more than 20 publications issued during the last 30 years, has demonstrated that a prooxidant diet, i.e., a diet with low content of vitamin E and high content of fatty acids, is promotive of leprous inflammation. The work of Bergel was confirmed by Mason and Dju (Symposium on Research in Leprosy, Leonard Wood Memorial-Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 8 May 1961, p 264).

We feel that the relationship, leprosy autooxidation of lipids, is the most important known factor in the pathogenesis of leprosy and it can be used as a starting point for experimental work dealing with prevention and treatment of leprosy. Unfortunately, leprologists are not very familiar with the chemistry of autooxidation, namely, with antioxidants, prooxidants, metal deactivators, free radicals, chain reactions, hydroperoxides, polimerization, copolimerization, tocopherols, endoperoxides, superoxides, etc.

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