

M. leprae Does Not Utilize DOPA

TO THE EDITOR:

Dr. Prabhakaran has repeatedly protested the experimental evidence showing that *M. leprae* does not oxidize DOPA. More and more accumulating data indicate that this labile compound is easily oxidized by many non-enzymatic factors. Auto-oxidation of DOPA is well known and so also is auto-confirmation of DOPA oxidase activity of *M. leprae* by Dr. Prabhakaran (Lepr. Rev. **48** [1977] 49-50).

In well controlled histochemical experiments Drs. J. Campo-Aasen and J. Convit (Histochemie **35** [1973] 63-66) were unable to detect any DOPA oxidase activity in *M. leprae*. These authors clearly showed that, "DOPA oxidase activity might derive from

other cells in leprosy lesions," and discuss the, "absorption of DOPA oxidase active enzymes upon the surface of mycobacteria."

Based on the results of Drs. Campo-Aasen and Convit and strengthened by others (IJL **43** [1975] 193-203, 204-209; **44** [1976] 435-442), we are unable to accept the, "Use of DOPA oxidation in the identification of *M. leprae*" as proposed by Drs. Prabhakaran and Kirchheimer (J. Bacteriol. **92** [1966] 1267-1268).

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