CORRESPONDENCE

This department is for the publication of informal communications that are of interest because they are informative and stimulating, and for the discussion of controversial matters. The mandate of this JOURNAL *is to disseminate information relating to leprosy in particular and also other mycobacterial diseases. Dissident comment or interpretation on published research is of course valid, but personality attacks on individuals would seem unnecessary. Political comments, valid or not, also are unwelcome. They might result in interference with the distribution of the* JOURNAL *and thus interfere with its prime purpose.*

Pyridine Extraction of *M. leprae*

TO THE EDITOR:

I take the liberty of referring to the paper entitled "Use of Pyridine for Differentiating *Mycobacterium leprae* from Other Mycobacteria in Direct Microscopy" by M. Slosarek, L. Sula, S. Theophilus, and L. Hruby, (Int. J. Lepr. **46** [1978] 154–159).

The authors have results similar to ours in sections obtained from lepromatous leprosy lesions as compared with lesions produced in humans by BCG. The disagreement arises when the authors work with smears taken directly from patients, and they compare them with cultivable mycobacteria.

Unfortunately, in this stage of their paper it seems as if the authors had not read ours since the technics they use both for treating with pyridine and for staining the slides are totally different from the ones used by us. In our paper we insist that the results published are obtained with a very precise technic since we had used several variants, and none of them gave comparable results except when using exactly the technic being published, which is 100% reproducible.

We have done recently new sets of tests with our method, using material from several leprosy patients as well as from several types of armadillos infected with human leprosy, and we obtained the same results as initially.

Since the authors refer to work done by Skinsnes, *et al.* (Int. J. Lepr. **43** [1975] 267–269), where they suggest that the loss of acid resistance of *M. leprae* after pyridine treatment is due to degenerative lesions of the bacterium produced by age, I would like to point out that the extraction methods with pyridine give excellent results with armadillo derived *M. leprae*, which are bacilli in full growth stages and which have almost a 100% index of solid forms when studied with the electron microscope.

We would like to recommend that the authors of the paper we are referring to follow the technic we have published step by step and then send their results in a Letter to the Editor as we are doing.

—Jacinto Convit, M.D.

Director
Instituto Nacional de Dermatologia
Apartado Postal 4043
Caracas, Venezuela