

BOOK REVIEW

Symposium on Immunotherapy and Immunoprophylaxis of Leprosy. Texts. November 25, 1982, Tokyo, Japan. Tokyo: Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation, 1983, 55 pp. (with summaries in Japanese of all lectures).

More than 30 years have passed since chemotherapy was first introduced to the treatment of leprosy. During this period, in addition to dapsone, other new derivatives of sulfone as well as powerful drugs such as clofazimine and an antibiotic rifampin came into use. However, we are faced in recent years with their serious consequences, that is to say, bacterial resistance to these chemotherapeutics. In order to meet the situation WHO has set up the Scientific Working Group on Immunology of Leprosy (IMMLEP) to start, among other things, research on the eventual development of a prophylactic vaccine against leprosy. As a preliminary task, they have promoted the production of *M. leprae* in large quantity by using armadillos and also purification of armadillo-derived *M. leprae* as well as some relevant immunological study of leprosy in general.

In responding to this general situation, Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation organized a Research Committee on Vaccine Development and related activities in 1980 with a special fund from the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation for this purpose.

As a preliminary step, accompanied by Dr. Y. Yuasa, I visited several research institutions in the United States and South America in January of 1981, and during this trip, we visited Dr. J. Convit, Director of the National Institute of Dermatology, at his laboratory in Caracas, Venezuela.

As a means to improve the treatment of his patients, Dr. Convit has been conducting clinical trials of intradermal administration of his original vaccine, that is, the mixture of live BCG and heat-killed *M. leprae* (6×10^8), as an immunotherapeutic agent for the past seven or eight years. It was timely for us that the results of 577 cases of such trials had just been tabulated when we visited Dr. Convit's office. And we were fortunate to come back to Japan with these data.

Back in Japan, we submitted the data to our committee and discussed a possibility of a follow up of Convit's immunotherapy procedure in Japan and elsewhere in Asia and of developing it further as a preventive vaccine. As a part of this program, we requested Prof. T. Ito of Osaka University to go to Caracas for three weeks. In April 1982 Dr. Yuasa and I again visited Caracas to attend the Conference and Workshop on Immunotherapy and Pathogenesis of Leprosy organized by WHO and Dr. Convit. Prof. Ito was still there, and during our stay we discussed with Dr. Convit the guidelines of the future collaboration between Dr. Convit's research group and our Foundation.

As the first step of such collaboration we decided to hold an international meeting on vaccine development with specialists from Japan together with overseas collaborators. The Symposium of Immunotherapy and Immunoprophylaxis of Leprosy was held in Tokyo in November, 1982, with Dr. Convit, Dr. Zúñiga, and Dr. Ulrich from Caracas as the main speakers.

This booklet carries the texts of lectures delivered by the three guest speakers. We also had some useful discussions during the two-day symposium, but we are obliged to omit the part of discussion for technical reasons in this booklet. Since the lectures were given in English without Japanese interpretation, we requested Prof. Ito to give a Japanese summary after the lectures to assist some of the Japanese participants to have a better comprehension of the interesting lectures. We have added this Japanese summary at the end of this booklet.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Convit and his colleagues, Dr. M. Zúñiga and Dr. M. Ulrich, who spared no effort for the progress of leprosy control activities in the world and accepted our request to fly over such a long distance to Japan in order to share their valuable experience in the exciting field of leprosy vaccine development with us. I sincerely hope that some worthwhile activities will develop among our colleagues in Japan and Asia as a result of this Symposium.—
Foreword by Morizo Ishidate