

## NEWS and NOTES

*This department furnishes information concerning institutions, organizations, and individuals engaged in work on leprosy and other mycobacterial diseases, and makes note of scientific meetings and other matters of interest.*

**India.** *Changing Face of Leprosy, a film.* The Katharina Kasper Leprosy Control Scheme, Bangalore, has produced a 20-minute documentary entitled "The Changing Face of Leprosy." The film deals with the extent of the leprosy problem, its cause, signs and symptoms of the disease, reasons for nerve damage and how to avoid them, the curability of the disease, need for rehabilitation in some old cases and how it can be done, health education aspects, and the ongoing MDT projects and their effects. The film projects the positive approach to the problem and aims at educating the people and the patients on the facts about leprosy. The film is available at cost price in 35 mm, 16 mm, and video tape. Video tapes are available in five languages: English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu. Cost of each print is: 35 mm = Rs. 8,200 16 mm = Rs. 5,800; video tape = Rs. 500.

For further information, write: Mr. H. Meermeeter, Project Officer, Katharina Kasper Leprosy Control Scheme, 16 Hutchins Road, Bangalore 560 005, India.—Kusht Vinashak **11** (1989) 20.

*Dr. Joseph A. Ponniah is new Director of SLR&TC, Karigiri.* Dr. Joseph A. Ponniah, formerly working in the Central Leprosy Teaching & Research Institute, Chengalpattu, took over as the new Director of Schieffelin Leprosy Research and Training Centre, Karigiri on 20 March 1989. Dr. Ponniah graduated from the Stanley Medical College, Madras. For a brief period, he was Dy. Medical Superintendent of Christian Medical College & Hospital, Vellore. Later, he joined the Central Leprosy Teaching & Research Institute, Chengalpattu, where he worked for 14 years in clinical work as well as teaching programs. He was transferred to Madras as Chief Medical Officer of the Central Government Health Service Scheme where he worked for nine years. He then moved to Nigeria at the request of

Christoffel Blindenmission, West Germany, where he was appointed as Leprologist in charge of Uzuakoli Leprosy Teaching & Referral Hospital and as Officer-in-Charge of Leprosy Control Programme, Imo State of Nigeria. He returned to India and was involved in reorganizing and revitalizing the Swedish Mission Hospital, Tirupattur, N. A. Dt., Tamil Nadu, until he took over as Director-designate of Schieffelin Leprosy Research & Training Centre, Karigiri.—*From Kusht Vinashak Monthly 11* (1989) 27.

*Dr. Claire Vellut honored.* Dr. Claire Vellut, Secretary of the Damien Foundation in India, Madras, has been conferred an Honorary Doctorate by Louvain University, Belgium, for her work in the field of leprosy. The citation conferring the doctorate reads:

"She, Dr. C. Vellut, landed at Polambakkam, a small sleepy village in Chingleput district, nearly 30 years ago. Chingleput district is a place with a very high prevalence of leprosy in the world. She spent 25 years visiting every house in the project area and collected information of 45,000 leprosy patients so that an epidemiological model could be developed according to international standards. Prof. M. F. Lechat, President of the International Leprosy Organization, with whom she developed the model, has published an epidemiometric model for leprosy, and the work is monumental. She is an authority in epidemiology of leprosy, with W.H.O., Governments of India, and Belgium. Among several fellows who have adorned the Academy, let us have one as our fellow, who has walked miles and miles of dusty villages in search of the poorest of patients afflicted with leprosy with kindness and concern with equal academic interest in leprosy. I recommend her for the Fellowship under Public Health speciality."—Kusht Vinashak **11** (1989) 19–20.

*Dr. Rajendra Prasad Gold Medal to Shri R. S. Mani.* Shri R. S. Mani, Technical Officer of the German Leprosy Relief Association, Madras, has been awarded the "Dr. Rajendra Prasad Gold Medal" instituted by the NLO, India, for being the best leprosy field worker in India. The award was given to him by Dr. (Mrs.) Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Minister of Welfare, Government of India, at the Inaugural Function of the XVI All India Leprosy Workers Conference held in Delhi this year. Shri R. S. Mani has been in leprosy field for over 35 years.—Kusht Vinashak **11** (1989) 20.

*Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL).* The following news items have been received from the Honorary Secretary, IAL, for publication.

"The Acworth Leprosy Hospital Society for Research, Rehabilitation and Education in Leprosy, Bombay 400 031, has given an amount to IAL to award a medallion to the best paper presentation at the Biennial Conference by a young Indian scientist and a medallion for the best published paper by a young Indian scientist in leprosy journals during years preceding the Biennial Conference.

"The awards for 1985–87 are announced. The best published paper award has been given to Dr. R.B. Narayanan from JALMA Institute for Leprosy, Agra, for his published paper in the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY, 1986, Vol. 54, on the subject of 'In vitro Studies on Dermal-Granuloma of Human Leprosy.'

"The best paper presentation award has been given to Shri A. Chaudhury, Foundation for Medical Research, Bombay, for his paper which was presented at the 15th Biennial Conference at Vishakhapatnam, A.P., on the subject of 'Inhibition of uptake of *M. leprae* by Culture of Schwann Cells using anti-leprosy drugs.'

"The medallions will be presented to them during the next Biennial Conference."

*National Leprosy Eradication Commission reconstituted.*

#### RESOLUTION

Government of India had set up a National Leprosy Eradication Commission for

the guidance and surveillance of National Leprosy Eradication Programme vide Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Resolution No: T.11012/3/83-CCD dated 19th April, 1985. Its term has already expired.

The National Leprosy Eradication Commission is now reconstituted by Government of India with immediate effect. The Composition of the Commission is as:

Chairman: Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare

Members: (a) *Union Ministers*

1. Union Minister of Finance
2. Union Minister of Planning
3. Minister of State for Welfare

(b) *Chief Ministers of States*

1. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh
2. Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh
3. Chief Minister of Karala
4. Chief Minister of Maharashtra
5. Chief Minister of Rajasthan

(c) *Eminent Leprologists/Social Workers*

1. Mother Teresa  
54-A, Lower Circular Road  
Calcutta 700 016
2. Dr. B. Sankaran  
Senior Orthopedic Consultant  
St. Stephen Hospital  
Tis Hazari, Dehli
3. Dr. S. D. Gokhale  
Editor, "Kesari"  
Pune
4. Dr. R. Ganapati  
Bombay Leprosy Project  
Vidhiyan Bhawan II  
V.N. Marg  
Bombay
5. Dr. (Mrs.) E. S. Thangaraj  
Leprosy Mission  
Salur-9, Vizianagaram  
Andhra Pradesh
6. Shri S. P. Tare

- Director  
Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation  
Hindi Nagar, Wardha  
Maharashtra
7. Dr. E. P. Fritschi  
Schieffelin Leprosy  
Research & Training  
Centre  
Karigiri, North Arcot  
District  
Tamil Nadu
8. Swami Jnanatmananda  
Bharat Sewashram Sangh  
Jamshedpur  
District Singbhum  
Bihar

Member Secretary: Secretary, Ministry of  
Health & Family Welfare (ex-officio).

M. S. Dayal  
Additional Secretary (H)

*State Leprosy Conference 1989.* The Tamil Nadu Branch of the Hind Kusht Nivaran Sangh in collaboration with the Christian Mission Hospital and Leprosy Centre, Chengalpattu; Damien Foundation, German Leprosy Relief Association, The Leprosy Mission, Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association, and Gremaltes Referral Hospital and Leprosy Centre organized a two-day state level leprosy conference for program managers and supervisory personnel on 10–11 March 1989. The theme of the conference was "MDT: Aspects and Future Strategy of Leprosy Eradication Programs." The conference was held at the Madras School of Social Work. Nearly 150 delegates from Tamil Nadu and some from far off places attended the conference.—Excerpted from *Kusht Vinashak* 11 (1989) 1–2.

**Switzerland.** *Report of Fifth Meeting Ad Hoc Drug Development Subgroup of the THELEP SWG.* The Ad hoc Drug Development Subgroup of the Scientific Working Group on the Chemotherapy of Leprosy (THELEP), a component of the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), met in Geneva, 23–24 April 1985, to identify the most promising areas of drug development. The Subgroup considered the

most important limitations to the effective treatment of leprosy and suggested how chemotherapy might be strengthened: by improving the method of administration of the established drugs (dapsone and clofazimine); by using new drugs, such as the quinolones or ansamycins, recently developed by the pharmaceutical industry; and by developing more potent dihydrofolate reductase inhibitors. The importance of securing the manufacture of a very promising slow-release dapsone formulation was recognized. The ansamycins also show considerable promise in the treatment of tuberculosis and *Mycobacterium avium*-complex infections. Their mechanisms of action and pharmacology in the mouse model and in human subjects were reviewed in order to assess which compounds should be given priority in investigations of their antileprosy activity in the mouse foot pad system. Consideration was also given to the importance of devising rapid *in vitro* screening systems for detecting antileprosy activity and of evaluating the performance of such procedures.—Summary of the Report

*Report of Fifth Meeting of the THELEP SWG.* The fifth meeting of the Scientific Working Group (SWG) on the Chemotherapy of Leprosy (THELEP) was held in Geneva, 13–15 October 1986, under the auspices of the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). Studies of the prevalence of primary and secondary dapsone-resistant leprosy and of the genesis of rifampin-resistant strains of *Mycobacterium leprae* were reviewed and reports on field studies of the combined drug regimens recommended by the WHO Study Group on Chemotherapy of Leprosy for Control Programmes for the treatment of both multibacillary and paucibacillary patients were presented and discussed. The regimens were extremely well tolerated and highly effective. Short-term trials to compare the speed with which individual drugs and combinations of drugs were able to kill *M. leprae* in previously untreated lepromatous patients were described, as were the results of the recently completed controlled clinical trials in Chingleput, India, and Bamako, Mali, in which persisting *M. leprae* were sought after treatment with a variety of

combined drug regimens. The synthesis and antibacterial activity of new dihydrofolate reductase inhibitors and the development of prolonged-release dapsone formulations were reported. The potential contributions of molecular biology were also considered in the light of recent success in cloning and expressing *M. leprae* DNA in *Escherichia coli*.—Summary of the Report

**U.K.** *Leprosy—a learning package—The Wellcome Tropical Institute.* The learning package consists of a handbook and set of 10 posters. The posters are elaborately produced on thick glossy paper that can be rolled up and easily transported. They are highly colored. The handbook reproduces the photographic material of the posters with considerable up-to-date written material. It is also a highly glossy production. The material is well explained and easy to understand and will be particularly useful to those teaching medical students and paramedicals. The tables and diagrams are good as are the clinical photographs. The sections on MDT, vaccines and immunopathology are well covered, as also are disability control and rehabilitation.

This package will be found particularly useful in educating medical students from the developed countries and in making them aware of the problems of leprosy. It is to be hoped that funds will be made available for its distribution to medical schools, and centers for the training of paramedicals in leprosy-endemic areas.—J. L. Turk (Leprosy Review)

“Leprosy—a learning package,” published by The Wellcome Tropical Institute, London, in 1988, is available for £55.

**U.S.A.** *The Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy 1990.* Dr. Victor George Heiser, a physician who devoted his life to the study and treatment of tropical diseases, provided in his will a multimillion dollar bequest for basic biomedical research on leprosy. The following awards were established and are available.

1) Postdoctoral Research Fellowships. To support young biomedical scientists in beginning postdoctoral training for leprosy research. Applicants should have M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent. While there is no age limit,

candidates should be at an early stage of postdoctoral research training. There are no citizenship requirements. Generally, postdoctoral training should be planned in an institution other than that in which the applicant obtained the doctorate. Candidates should be interested in obtaining research training directly related to leprosy study. Initial awards are for 1 year, renewable for a second year, at stipend levels between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per annum.

2) Research Grants. To provide limited support to laboratories involved in leprosy research training. Applicants should be senior investigators who are experienced in leprosy research and associated with a laboratory providing training opportunities in this field. Grants may be sought for proposals which are both of high scientific caliber and clearly related to leprosy. Start-up funds may be requested for new projects of facilities which show promise of receiving support from other sources within 1 year and of contributing to leprosy research. Grants will not exceed \$20,000 and are limited in duration to 1 year. These grants will not be awarded for clinical trials and they may not be used for salaries.

3) Visiting Research Awards. To promote collaborative research in studies of leprosy and to encourage clinical experience with leprosy by facilitating access to centers in which clinical manifestations of the disease are being correlated with laboratory findings. Because of the high cost of travel, awards in this category will be made only under special circumstances. Candidates should be established investigators in leprosy who wish to carry out specific research objectives in a distant or foreign institution. There are no citizenship requirements. Up to 6 consecutive months of support for travel and subsistence costs will be awarded to successful candidates.

Deadline for all applications is 1 February 1990. All applications must be in English (one original and four copies). There are no application forms. For further information write: Mrs. Barbara M. Hugonnet, Director, Heiser Program for Research in Leprosy, 450 East 63rd Street, New York, New York 10021, U.S.A.—(Adapted from Heiser Program brochure)