

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.

Brazil. *Brazilian Congresses.* The President of the Organizing Committee, Dr. Diltor V. A. Opromolla, has announced the preliminary program for the IX Congress of the Brazilian Association of Hansenology and the IV Congress of the College of Hansenology of the Endemic Countries to be held at Iguacu Falls, Parana, Brazil, 4–8 June 1997. The program will include pre-Congress courses on diagnosis and treatment, research methodology, and social and educational aspects. Conferences will be held in therapeutics, immunology, genetics, rehabilitation, elimination, and neural lesions. There will be seminars on treatment, reactions, immunology, epidemiology, social aspects, and elimination, as well as the presentation of individual papers and posters.

For further information contact: Executive Secretariat, IN TIME Promocoes e Eventos Ltda, Av. Paulista, 2073 Horsa I cj 501, 01311-300 Sao Paulo, Brazil. Tel = 55-11-285-5549; Fax = 55-11-283-5409.

India. *ALH RRE seminar on Strategy for Elimination of Leprosy from Maharashtra by 2000 A.D.*

A seminar on Strategy for Elimination of Leprosy from Maharashtra by 2000 A.D. was organized by the Acworth Leprosy Hospital Society for Research, Rehabilitation and Education in Leprosy on 10 June 1996.

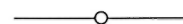
The Seminar was Chaired by Dr. J. A. Ponniah, NLEP Consultant, State of Maharashtra, and the resource persons included: Dr. R. Ganapati, Member, Maharashtra State Leprosy Council, and Dr. J. T. Kale, Jt. Director of Health Services, Leprosy, State of Maharashtra.

The Technical Session started with an appraisal talk on Present Status of NLEP of Maharashtra by Dr. J.T. Kale. This was followed by a presentation on Case Detection and Case Holding in Unapproachable and Difficult Areas in rural, urban and special situations in some selected districts of Ma-

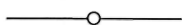
harashtra. A special presentation on deformity care and disability prevention and the strategy for involvement of health staff from the nonleprosy sector was made by the representative from the Joint Director of Health Service unit. This was followed by participation from the President of the Indian Medical Association, Maharashtra Branch, at the general practitioner level and by representatives at the practicing dermatologist level.

About 45–50 delegates representing state government, NGOs in leprosy, staff and students from the medical colleges participated in the seminar.

After extensive scientific deliberations the following points were recommended. 1) As the operational experiment in hilly terrain of Panvel was highly successful, it was recommended that similar strategies may be developed worth emulating in other difficult parts of the districts of Maharashtra. 2) It was also recommended that in some difficult districts certain community volunteers may be identified and trained in suspecting leprosy. 3) It was recommended that in urban areas, a smear facility provision be started for the city of Greater Bombay with the active assistance of staff from ALHS to the practicing dermatologists. It was decided to start this set up on a pilot basis in one suburb of Greater Bombay, after identifying a group of practicing dermatologists. 4) On involvement of associations like the Indian Medical Association, it was recommended to avail the assistance of the leprosy wing (to be started) of the Indian Medical Association for case detection, referral of cases for research, etc. 5) It was recommended to have a separate strategy for certain tribal population of Maharashtra such as advance dispensing of blister-calendar treatment packs to the patients.—Materials from S. S. Naik, Hon. Secretary, ALH RRE Society



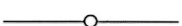
Booklet on field guide for disability care issued. Dr. B. K. Dhir, Program Officer of Tuberculosis Control in Bombay and Dy. Executive Health Officer, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, released at a special function on 23 July 1996 a booklet, entitled "Disability Prevention and Care in Leprosy—A Practical Guide for Field Workers," which is proposed to be used as a field manual by paramedical auxiliaries in Maharashtra and North Eastern states. Dr. R. Ganapati, Director, Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP), observed that the booklet is the second in the series of four academic publications planned to mark the 20th year celebrations of BLP this year. The first in the series entitled "Leprosy—A Glimpse at the Changing Scenario," was released on 10 June by Dr. J.A. Ponniah, WHO Consultant, NLEP, Maharashtra and Goa.—Materials from R. Ganapati



17th Anniversary of Leprosy Hospital in Bombay. Dr. B. K. Dhir, Program Officer, Tuberculosis Control, and Dy. Executive Health Officer, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), who was the chief guest at the 17th Anniversary of the Mrs. Leela Moolgaokar Leprosy Ward managed by Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP) in the Adams Wylie Memorial Hospital, observed that the extensive field expertise of the leprosy elimination program in the city will be highly useful for checking the spread of tuberculosis (TB) in view of the close similarities of field strategies employed in these two diseases.

Dr. R. Ganapati, Director, BLP, appreciated the enthusiasm which is at present evident in the TB control program in the city under the leadership of Dr. Dhir. He offered the manpower engaged currently in leprosy work as well as drugs by way of assistance to BMC in practicing "directly observed treatment" for sputum-positive cases in selected areas.

Dr. V. V. Pai, Dy. Director, BLP, welcomed the guests assembled at the hospital. Mr. P. Narayanaswamy, Manager, BLP, proposed a vote of thanks.—Materials from R. Ganapati



XIX Biennial Conference of IAL. "The XIX Biennial Conference of the Indian Association of Leprologists was held at B.J. Medical College, Pune, from 15 to 17 December 1995. The Conference was attended by about 450 delegates from all over the country and abroad. One-hundred-fifty papers were presented at the conference, 81 papers as oral presentations and another 69 papers as poster presentations.

"The inaugural session started with the invocation and by lighting the lamp by the Chief Guest Dr. C. S. Poonawalla, Patron of the Conference. Dr. Vittal Jadhav, organizing secretary of the conference, extended a welcome to the dignitaries and delegates on behalf of the Indian Association of Leprologists and the organizers of the conference, viz., (1) Poona District Leprosy Committee, (2) Dr. Bandorawalla Leprosy Hospital, (3) Joint Director (Leprosy), Government of Maharashtra, (4) Department of Dermatology, B.J. Medical College, and (5) Armed Forces Medical College. This was followed by the inaugural speech by the Chief Guest Dr. C.S. Poonawalla, Chairman, Serum Institute of India Limited. The Chief Guest in his inaugural speech commended the leprologists for the yeoman service they have been rendering and called for a united approach in rehabilitating person disabled because of leprosy. He pointed out the danger of deformities and disabilities severely affecting the working capacity of affected persons whose social life would also be very much affected. He stressed the need for empowerment of these persons so that they become self-dependent and respected citizens. Dr. Jal Mehta, Chairman of the organizing committee, read out the message of Mr. H. Kober, President, GLRA. In his address to the gathering, he mentioned that patient care should be viewed from the total perspective of rehabilitating and managing the patient, so that there is improvement in the living conditions and quality of life of the leprosy patients. He called upon social workers and leprologists to ensure that there was no resurgence of the disease because of complacency on the part of government and other organizations. Dr. Mridula Phadke, Dean, B.J. Medical College, released the souvenir and appreciated the efforts of leprologists in solving the problem of leprosy in our country. The

NGOs, and other donor agencies such as: Damien Foundation, DANLEP, the NSL, The Leprosy Mission, GLRA, AIFO and LEPR-India, who had contributed generously to the conference, were felicitated by the organizing committee.

"The President of IAL, Dr. M. D. Gupte in his presidential address reviewed the impressive program of MDT coverage at national and global levels."

"The inaugural session ended with vote of thanks proposed by Dr. P. M. Mahajan, Secretary, Scientific Committee.

"Scientific Sessions were held simultaneously in two different halls on all three days. Poster sessions were also conducted simultaneously along with oral sessions on the first two days. Two panel discussions were held, one on each day, during the first two days. The topics discussed were 'Recent advances in microbiology and immunology of leprosy with clinical application' and 'Early detection of nerve damage and disability prevention.' Dr. K. V. Desikan and Dr. D. D. Palande were the chairpersons for the panel discussions, respectively. Eminent leprologists and scientists took part in the discussions.

"Apart from oral presentations and discussions, there were guest lectures by eminent scientists. The guest lectures included 'In vitro cultivation of *Mycobacterium leprae* and development of new antileprosy drugs' (Dr. Arvind M. Dhople, U.S.A.); 'Social and economic rehabilitation of leprosy patients' (Dr. Jal Metha, India) and 'Community-based rehabilitation in leprosy' (Dr. Sunil Deepak, Italy). There was a separate session for the best paper presentation award. Five papers competed in this session for the award.

"The theme of the conference was 'Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation in Leprosy.' There were a good number of papers on this subject, giving information on prevalence of physical disability and disability profiles, disability before, during and after multidrug therapy and also on disability prevention and rehabilitation. There were papers which brought out the problem of migration of leprosy patients and proposed suggestions to bring changes in the routine management information system. Papers on physical disability and its impact on the productivity of the affected individ-

ual calculated in terms of disability affected life years (DALY) and the need to assess the trend and present situation of leprosy in areas where the MDT campaign was going on by rapid assessment methods and sample surveys were presented.

"ATP bioluminescence for determination of *M. Leprae* viability, taxonomic similarity between CAN bacteria and *M. leprae*, nucleic acids from biopsy specimens for molecular epidemiological studies, DNA finger printing for characterization of mycobacterial strains, crossreactive antigens between mycobacteria and host proteins, use of PCR to isolate environmental mycobacteria from leprosy patients, and the role of the stress protein in the biology of the mycobacteria were some of the studies presented and discussed during the conference. BCG was found to protect the younger age group from leprosy in 25% of the people, and immunochemotherapy was reported to be effective in multibacillary leprosy patients. There were reports giving information on patients treated with MDT and followed up for 13 years without any bacteriological relapse or reactions. Many papers relating to absenteeism among MDT patients, problems of urban leprosy control, training of NLEP managers, and methods to monitor peripheral neuropathy were presented.

"On the last day of the conference in the concluding session, Dr. K.V. Desikan delivered the valedictory address. He asked the young scientists and leprologists to carry forward the task left behind by their seniors. He cautioned them not to be carried away by their personal prejudices. He mentioned that one should not be very rigid on stopping treatment at an early stage. He also mentioned about the increasing tendency in many people to neglect single lesion cases. Stressing the point, he said lesions are very important for the individual patient and, in turn, patient care is very important for leprologists. He expressed satisfaction over the standard of most of the scientific papers presented in the conference. He thanked the organizers for providing a useful and successful conference. The valedictory function ended with vote of thanks by Dr. Sreevatsa, Treasurer and Acting Secretary of IAL."—Indian J. Lepr. 68 (1996) 209–210

Noordeen and Watson win International Gandhi Award for 1996. The International Gandhi Award was instituted by the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation in recognition of meritorious work in the field of leprosy. The award is given biennially, and it carries a cash award of two lakh rupees, a citation and a medal.

Dr. S. K. Noordeen (WHO, Geneva) and Ms. Jean Watson (U.K.) were the recipients of this prestigious award this year. The President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, presented the awards at an impressive ceremony chaired by Dr. K. R. Narayanan, Hon'ble Vice-President of India, and held at 12 noon on 30 January 1996 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

The Citation reads:

"Dr. Noordeen joined WHO in 1979 and formulated global leprosy research which resulted in the introduction of Multi Drug Therapy—a medical miracle in leprosy, bringing down the number of estimated leprosy cases from 10 to 12 millions to 1.8 millions in 1995. It is due to his leadership and active support of country Governments in membership, the WHO passed a resolution to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem by 2000 A.D. Dr. Noordeen is a world leader of the elimination movement. He is one of the chosen band of medical men & health workers whose mission in life is to serve the victims of leprosy and the cause of elimination.

"Ms. Jean Margaret Watson, a specialist in physiotherapy and consultant in prevention of disabilities and advisor in rehabilitation. She has worked in the UK, Hongkong, Malaysia, Australia & Ethiopia. Her writings & teachings are a treasure for health workers all over the world.

"The life and work of Ms. Jean Watson as well as Dr. S. K. Noordeen is a saga of compassion and dedication. It is a luminous chapter in the story of human struggle against leprosy.

"In appreciation of their selfless dedication to this cause, the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation has conferred upon them the International Gandhi Awards for 1996. May your exemplary, humanitarian

service inspire the generations to come to follow your footsteps."

Spain. *Congress and Symposium on Mycobacteria.* The 18th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Mycobacteriology (ESM-97) and the 2nd International Symposium on Mycobacteria of Clinical Interest (ISM-97) will be held in Cordoba, Spain, on 17–18 June (ESM-97) and 19–20 June (ISM-97) 1997, respectively.

The ESM meeting will focus on all of the aspects of the mycobacteria, including research, molecular biology, laboratory mycobacteriology, etc. As in previous meetings of the ESM the aim of this meeting is to promote interdisciplinary exchanges and to stimulate discussion among the ESM members and others interested in mycobacteria.

The International Symposium on Mycobacteria of Clinical Interest is a second edition of the first that was organized in 1985 in Cordoba with the participation of more than 300 people from 35 countries of the five continents and was cosponsored by the WHO, IUAT and other scientific societies.

The extraordinary progress of our knowledge on mycobacteria of clinical interest in recent years and the increasing problem of tuberculosis and mycobacteria in all countries of the world led us to organize this 2nd International Symposium. This Symposium will provide an opportunity for discussion on new research findings related to all aspects of mycobacteria of clinical interest.

For more information contact: Professor Manuel J. Casal, Mycobacteria Reference Laboratory, Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Cordoba, 14004 Cordoba, Spain. FAX 34-57-218229

U.S.A. *New leprosy cases in the U.S. in 1995.* According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 144 new leprosy cases in 1995. This is in keeping with the numbers of new cases per year prior to the increased influx of Indo-Chinese refugees in 1978–1988. California with 52 had the most new cases followed by Texas with 36, Hawaii with 19, and New York with 13.