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# 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.*

## Detection of *Mycobacterium leprae* DNA by PCR in Blood Sample from Nine-Banded Armadillo: Preliminary Results

TO THE EDITOR:

Identification of *Mycobacterium leprae*, the agent of leprosy, is difficult, partly due to the inability of the bacillus to grow *in vitro*. Although *M. leprae* was the first agent to be linked to an infectious disease, leprosy is still today an enigmatic disease which is not fully understood. Multibacillary patients are thought to be the main source of *M. leprae* and the transmission is mainly aerogenic; it is generally recognized that the nasal cavity is involved in the carriage and shedding of *M. leprae* ([13]). The natural transmission among armadillos in the southern parts of the United States of America has been described ([10]). This discovery suggested the possibility that the nine-banded armadillo plays a role in the transmission of human leprosy in the United States of America. Reich has proposed that clin[illegible] careful choice of primers, high specificity. Therefore, with PCR the investigative studies about the sources of the leprosy bacillus have become better understood than in the past. Santos, *et al.*, were able to detect DNA from *M. leprae*. The DNA was detected by CPR from 21 out-of-water sources in the leprosy endemic region of Indonesia, and strongly suggested that leprosy was transmitted by contaminated water ([4]). Many other sources of *M. leprae* were investigated by PCR. We have been studying the armadillo as a possible source of leprosy bacilli since 1999. Our survey was conducted in the rural area of Espírito Santo State, Brazil, where the blood of 14 nine-banded armadillos was collected. This region is hyperendemic for leprosy and the presence of nine-banded armadillos is frequent as well as the human's contact with the animal, direct and indirect ([1]). The cap[illegible]