

NEWS and NOTES

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

Calendar of Meetings and Events

Day	mm/yy	Location	Details	Contact	e-mail
31-3	Jan/Feb-05	Eskom Convention Centre, Midrand, South Africa	African Leprosy Congress	Dr. S. K. Noordeen	noordeen@eth.net www.wits.ac.za/leprosy
4-6	Feb-05	Robben Island, South Africa	"Stigma, Identity and Human Rights. The Experience of Leprosy in the Context of HIV/AIDS"	Jo Robertson or Anwei Law	jo.robertson@history-of-medicine.oxford.ac.uk alaw@idealeprosydignity.org
5	Nov-05	Joao Pessoa	10th Brazilian Congress of Hansenology	Francisca Estrela	

Notice. Wellesley Bailey Awards for Courage and Achievement. The Wellesley Bailey awards are unique. In June 2005, two remarkable people who have had leprosy and faced significant challenges from the disease, will be presented with the fourth Wellesley Bailey Award. There is no other international award which acknowledges the accomplishments of those who have been affected by leprosy.

Created in 1999 to celebrate the life and work of Mr. Wellesley Bailey, founder of The Leprosy Mission, the Wellesley Bailey awards honour those who have made extraordinary contributions to society through overcoming the social stigma and physical challenges of leprosy.

A former recipient of the awards said "Leprosy is a ruthless thief, which first, turns off all the lights before you notice that there is an intruder. Then in the total blackout it viciously created, it robs you of every single irreplaceable treasure you possess."

The recipients will have been active members in their community for at least five yrs and will be champions for the cause of leprosy through their achievements.

Each Award includes a prize of £1000 and a presentation plaque. The recipients will be invited to travel to Dublin, with a supporter of their choice, to receive the Award at an awards ceremony in the first week of June 2005.

Nominations for the 4th Wellesley Bailey awards. These unique international awards acknowledge the accomplishments of those who have made extraordinary con-

tributions to society despite the challenges of leprosy.

Recipients must have personally experienced leprosy, will have been active members of their community for at least five years and champions for the cause of leprosy.

Each award includes a prize of £1000 and a presentation plaque. The recipient will be invited to travel to Dublin for a special awards ceremony in the first week of June 2005.

Nominations must be submitted on the official form available from Glynis Forbes. The deadline for nominations is **10 January 2005**.

Notice. U.N. Sub-Commission on Human Rights Resolves to Study Leprosy and Human Rights.

The following excerpt is from a press release from the Nippon Foundation, dated Aug. 16, 2004, forwarded to the JOURNAL by Dr. P. K. Gopal, President, IDEA International.

August 9, Geneva—Today, at the European Headquarters of the United Nations, the 56th Sub-Commission on Human Rights reached a consensus to take up the question of human rights violations visited upon leprosy patients, cured people and their families.

The sub-commission adopted a formal resolution to study the issue. Under the auspices of this resolution, members of the commission will conduct an investigation and produce a working paper on leprosy and human rights. This paper will then be presented at the 57th meeting of the sub-commission.

There are roughly 500,000 leprosy patients and 20 million former patients around the world. When family members are taken into account, over 100 million people are suffering from the needless discrimination related to leprosy. Leprosy is incorrectly thought by many to be hereditary or a supernatural punishment, and is thus greatly feared. However, with multi-drug therapy, this "incurable disease" has become completely curable. In spite of this fact, individuals affected by the disease must still suffer discrimination that limits their ability to study, marry or find work. Even after death, families often face lasting social discrimination.

The full text of the resolution follows:

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 5

**PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION
Draft resolution 2004/
Discrimination against leprosy victims
and their families**

*The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights,*

Recalling article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, *Recalling also* article 2 of the Universal Declaration, which provides that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, *Recalling further* article 5 of the Universal Declaration, which provides that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, *Concerned* that millions of people suffer from discrimination resulting from physical and mental illness or handicap, *Concerned in particular* that tens of millions of people suffer not only from leprosy as a disease, which is scientifically and medically proven to be curable and manageable, but also from political, legal, economic or social discrimination and isolation as a result of misunderstanding and indifference, and lack of legislative or administrative mea-

asures to prohibit such discrimination and to protect and remedy the victims, *Requests* Mr. Yozo Yokota to prepare, without financial implications, a preliminary working paper on discrimination against leprosy victims and their families, to be submitted to the fifty-seventh session of the Sub-Commission under the agenda item entitled "Prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities."

**Notice. The First Libyan Dermatology
and Venereology Society Congress
Benghazi-Libya 23–25 July 2004.**

The Libyan Dermatology and Venereology Society is honored with the participation of the international experts (from U.S.A., U.K., France, Malta, Tunis, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen), Libyan dermatologists and doctors from related specialities who gathered at the first Libyan Dermatology and Venereology Society Congress held at Tibesti hotel, Benghazi from the 23rd to 25th of July 2004. The theme of the Congress was "For healthy skin free from diseases." Congress president and Organizing Committee Chairman was Dr. Gamal A. Duweb, M.D. Scientific Committee Chairman was Dr. Mohamed Benghazil, M.D.

The scientific program included a variety of learning styles such as plenary lectures, free communications, case presentations, a and poster session, covering most of the common dermatological diseases including leprosy, leishmaniasis, mycotic infections, psoriasis, acne, vitiligo, eczema and genodermatosis.

During the leprosy session, Professor W. Cains Smith talked about recent advances in prevalence and treatment of leprosy and its complications; he pointed out that since 1985, the global prevalence of leprosy has fallen by almost 90% and more than 13 million have been cured, which has been achieved by the implementation of intensive courses of multi-drug therapy (MDT). Also, the number of new cases detected has remained static at around 700,000/yr.

Professor Paul Fine, in his lecture on the elimination of leprosy: Progress and problems, clarified that programs emphasize the prevalence data and changes in case finding methods and in treatment regimens, making assessment of trends difficult. Fine also



FIG. 1. Closing ceremony. Right: Prof. Gamal A. Duweb, Congress President. Left: Prof. Awad Abudajaja, Vice President of the Libyan Board of Medical Specialties.

mentioned that the natural history of *Mycobacterium leprae* infection and the leprosy disease are still poorly understood, but it is evident that infection and disease will remain a problem in local populations in several parts of the world for the foreseeable future.

Professor Yassin Alqubati discussed the social effects of leprosy stigma among Arab

countries, and the importance of community health education in treating leprosy patients.

During the free communications and poster session, local data analysis of 92 patients registered at a leprosy clinic in Benghazi was presented and showed that lepromatous leprosy (LL) was the most common clinical type; LL patients were 64% of the total, and 89.1% of those had completed MDT treatment courses.

Discussion with the experts concluded that the number of new cases is low. The difficulties of leprosy and contactant tracing was discussed in detail, as was the regular screening of the new cases and their families. Possibly recommending regular screening for the contactant of registered cases was also discussed.



FIG. 2. Leprosy Session Chairpersons. Right to left: Prof. Paul Fine, Prof. Yassin Alqubati, Prof. W. Cains Smith.

Notice. African Leprosy Congress. A conference entitled "Stigma, Identity and Human Rights. The Experience of Leprosy

in the Context of HIV/AIDS” will be held on Robben Island, South Africa, from Feb. 4–6, 2005. For information on the conference and how to register, please contact Jo Robertson, jo.robertson@history-of-medicine.oxford.ac.uk or Anwei Law, alaw@idealeprosydignity.org

Notice, from Brazil,

Brazilian Seminar on Hansen’s Disease. The Brazilian Society of Hansenology held its second national seminar on July 23–24, 2004 in Ribeirão Preto. The meeting was attended by participants of a ample array of representative of health workers from Brazil, including physical therapists, psychologists and social workers. The president of the Brazilian Society of Hansenology, Prof. Norma T. Foss, was in charge of the organizing committee and conducted the opening and closing sessions. Invited guest speaker was Dr. P. K. Das from the Amsterdam Medical Center, The Netherlands.

10th Brazilian Congress of Hansenology. The Brazilian Society of Hansenology will to hold its 10th Congress next November, 2005 in João Pessoa, Paraíba State. The local organizing committee is headed by Dr. Francisca Estrela. The last national Congress was held together with the 16th ILA Congress in Salvador, August 2002. Many topics are planned for discussion in this meeting, including the achievements of the efforts towards elimination of leprosy in Brazil.

Brazilian National Leprosy Control Program under new leadership.

Dr. Rosa Castalia França Ribeiro Soares has been appointed as the new head of the leprosy control program in Brazil. Dr. Soares is a specialist in public health and has worked for many years in the immunization program in Brazil. She has also had considerable experience in leprosy while chief of the control program in the State of Bahia. Dr. Soares is now leading a new program in the Ministry of Health—the National Program of Elimination of Leprosy—the main goal of which is to achieve elimination of leprosy by improving and expanding diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of cases in the basic health system network. Integration and partnership with other organizations has been identified as essential to achieve the goal of

elimination and in this regard many partners have joined the Program such as ILEP, Children Pastoral, MORHAN, and CON-SASEMES, among others.

Notice. New AIFO Website.

<http://www.aifo.it/english/index.htm>

Among the new additions to this webpage are the following:

1. A page on PHM in Italy and information about PHA-II in Cuenca next year. This page includes links to women’s access to health and million signature campaigns.
2. Online books, documents and reports related to leprosy, disability, primary health care, etc.
3. Some online learning courses on leprosy and tropical diseases.
4. Online exhibitions—at present there is just one exhibition (on Angola) but hopefully new ones will be added soon.

—Dr. Sunil Deepak

AIFO, Italy

Notice, from India,

Schieffelin Leprosy Research and Training Centre Golden Jubilee.

As a part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, SLR&TC, Karigiri, India, hosted a Scientific Workshop entitled, “Leprosy Research: Challenges of the Decade,” from August 16–18, 2004, at Karigiri. The Workshop was hosted by Dr. V. P. Macaden, Vice Chairman of the Centre’s Board of Governors. Dr. Margaret Brand was the featured guest and keynote speaker, and other dignitaries in attendance included Dr. N. K. Ganguly, Directory General, ICMR, and Dr. S. Habayeb, WHO Representative to India. The workshops included state of the art presentations on both basic and clinical aspects of leprosy, and discussion groups composed of physicians and scientists attending from India, Nepal, the Netherlands, the U.K., Kenya, Brazil, and the United States. The participants worked in small groups to develop research proposals, and were encouraged to continue to collaborate in the development of these proposals so that the research projects may be initiated in the near future.