STAINING BACILLI IN SECTIONS

To the Editor:

Regarding the staining of the leprosy bacillus in the tissues, it is to be said that I, too, have often been unable to make satisfactory preparations. According to my experience the difficulty lies in the fact that the bacilli have only a limited degree of acid-fastness and are also not very resistant to alcohol.

Because of these facts, especially when working with important material, I have always carried out the staining under continuous control with the microscope. This control is for the purpose of making sure that the red color of the carbol-fuchsin is still present in the tissue elements, as the connective tissue. When the color is present, bacilli can be found most readily. If all of the color has disappeared from the section, or smear, the prospects are slight of finding bacilli.

Precaution is taken to remove the acid from the preparation

as thoroughly as possible by repeated washing with water. Alcohol is similarly removed with repeated or prolonged treatment with xylol. It has repeatedly happened that, when I have decolorized with acid alcohol, the bacilli were well stained at first but had faded completely within the next few days.

In work there is an inconvenience in inequalities of thickness of the section, for even with the best microtomes and the sharpest knives the thickness varies in different parts of the tissue. For this reason the portions of the sections that differ should be treated differently in staining, but since that is not possible in practice I have done as well as possible by controlling the staining under the microscope.

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