

CORRESPONDENCE

Jamaica drops "leprosy": "In Jamaica we have now succeeded in substituting 'Hansen's Disease' for the old terminology in medical circles. Officially the Ministry of Health now uses this new terminology. Consequently our department is known as the 'Hansen's Disease Control Unit'. Officers in the Unit then bear that designation. You will also be glad to know that the old out-moded 'Hansen Home' is now to be replaced by a 'Dermatology Unit' in a near by large Spanish Town General Hospital. So, slowly the old gives way to the new."

OLIVER W. HASSELBLAD
Kingston, Jamaica

Campaign against leprostigma in Rumania: "I had the happy opportunity to read the last two numbers of your journal, at the Medical Library of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest. I found them a valuable source of information and I am sure I need this journal for teaching and for my personal information. I agree with your view concerning Hansen's disease. I shall do my best to combat leprostigma, by lectures and papers in medical and non-medical journals in our country. Though I am from a non-endemic country, I agree with the foundation of the College of Hansenology; I have already sent the coupon to Dr. Azulay, in Rio de Janeiro. I will be very pleased and I would greatly appreciate receiv-

ing your important publications on Hansen's disease, at our Clinic."

EMIL TOMA
Infectious & Tropical Diseases
Clinic
"V. Babes" Hospital
Bucharest, Rumania

Sowing the seeds in Italy: "Taking advantage of my vacation in Italy (*) I am spreading here your ideas about leprostigma. Firstly, I spoke to a select audience in a cultural center of Pistoia. Since then I have received a series of invitations from 20 parishes, 15 youth centers, 6 universities, two local TV stations, one newspaper, one hospital in Pistoia, another one in Firenze. 20.000 copies of an article I wrote have been distributed. What will come out from all this I do not know, but the seeds have been sown and the receptivity was great."

Father UMBERTO GUIDOTTI
Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil

An irrefutable appeal: "I hope that many more countries understand and urgently put into practice the appeal that you have been making for many years, keeping in view an adequate education to liberate patients from the stigma of "leprosy". Your appeal is ir-

(*) You certainly need a vacation now, Father Guidotti.

refutable and essential for the success of all preventive measures."

MOACIR TEIXEIRA PINTO
Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil

A future full of advances: "In response to the call of your magazines, I wish to be included as a Founder of the College of Hansenology of the Endemic Countries, an institution whose necessity has been long felt. Its brilliant organization initiated by the Brazilian group assures a future full of advances in the knowledge, investigation and treatment of this tremendous scourge."

J.V. CHAPARRO
Cali, Colombia

Hanseniasis is not "leprosy"!: "In the course given in Piracicaba from 7th to 11th of February I showed a poster to justify your campaign. A high official in the local public health administration pronounced these words: 'Now I understand why hanseniasis is not leprosy!'"

ROBERTO BITTENCOURT
Centro de Saúde III — Casa Branca
São Paulo, Brazil

"Rooting" against leprostigma: "I am following your crusade against leprostigma and in favor of the social rehabilitation of the hanseniasis patient. In this saintly battle I am an enthusiastic 'rooter'".

GIOVANNI BARUFFA
Faculty of Medicine
Pelotas, R.G. do Sul, Brazil

Classes on a neologism: "I am a teacher of Portuguese in the 2nd cycle of the Catholic High School, in Diamantina. Your publication about the substitution of the term "Hanseniasis" for the hor-

ryfying word "Leprosy" came to my notice. I am going to give classes on the necessity of that neologism."

Father J. LAGO DA ROCHA
Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Cancel the words "leprosy" and "leper" : "I have read the letter of the members of the Mission Pistoia of Manaus written for the 1979 Pentecost and I agree with all appeals made (to cancel the words "leprosy" and "leper", and to adopt Hanseniasis or Hansen's disease)."

FABIO FIRENZUOLI
Firenze, Italy

Hanseniasis, a disease like the others: "I agree with the fight to banish the word "leprosy" — which leads the patient to infamy and to expulsion from society — and to make of "Hanseniasis" a disease like the others."

5.664 signed letters
Pistoia and Firenze, Italy

The fight against ignorance: "I agree that hanseniasis is a disease like the others ; therefore, I will participate in the propagation of this fight against the ignorance and superstitions which surrounds this skin disease."

STEFANO ULIVI
Pistoia, Italy

The courage to seek treatment: "I fully agree with you to change the name of this disease. Perhaps the patients might finally have the courage to seek treatment."

FRANCESCA GIUSTI
Pistoia, Italy

Poverty, worse than stigma: "As pointed out by you, Health Education is the only way out to control Hanseniasis and that is an especially slow and steady process. In our country, mainly in rural areas, where the disease is more prevalent, the social stigma is a lesser evil, when compared to the indifference of many patients. This in turn is due to extreme poverty and their fear to lose the labour for a day, for either consultation or treatment."

K.S. ANANDA KUMAR
Anantapur, India

Encouraging words from the President of the Mexico Congress: "I thank Dr. Cassio M. de Carvalho for having understood the reasons that forced me to resign the editorial body of 'Hansenologia Internationalis'. However, I hope that you accept this letter for publication and that I may continue cooperating in the fight against lepro-stigma."

"I think that all those who have been fighting against labelling human beings with the degrading pejorative 'leprosy' should be elated and feel encouraged by Professor's Latapi's opening address, inaugurating the XI International Leprosy Congress, Mexico City, 1978. For the first time, officially and directed to a large and distinguished audience, which included the President of Mexico, fighters have been qualified as 'persons with good intentions' (Intern. J. Leprosy, 47 (n.º 2, supl.) :259, 1979) instead of the usual "impostors", "fools" and the like. The fact that they were also considered 'naive' should not make them feel depressed. History is full of 'naive' people who have contributed to progress."

"Naive they certainly have shown to be, attempting to get the support of the

developed English and French speaking non-endemic countries in the campaign against the old pejorative which causes so much social, medical and psychological suffering in the Portuguese and Spanish speaking underdeveloped and endemic areas. The Dutch "Invaliden" may now be the respected "Gehandikaptten" and the term "neurotic" may now be taboo to the American Psychiatric Academy (*Veja*, Jan. 10, 1979, p. 51) ; the old infamous "venereal" may change overnight to 'sexually transmissible' diseases, in order not to offend the large 'sexually permissive' North Atlantic masses. But the effort to banish the most degrading term of all times, 'in order to achieve a social and cultural change in Brazil' surprises a former editor of the International J. of Leprosy (*Leprosy Rev.*, 44:94-95, 1973). Only naiveté could explain that effort."

"To ask influential North-Atlantic charities to jeopardize their finances by dropping the defiling pejorative "leprosy", which is admitted as stigmatizing, opprobrious and loathsome and a disease-spreading factor in underdeveloped Latin America, nevertheless "essential for fund raising" (*Leprosy Rev.*, 44: 70-74, 1973) is definitely a clear symptom of serious and incurable naiveté."

"However, I must disagree with Professor Latapi when he says that 'nothing would be gained by changing the name', publicly criticizing the new destigmatizing policies of Brazil, Portugal and Bolivia, adopted after the colossal failure of their previous attempts to educate with offensive 'labels of primary force'. Name changing has worked countless times, and those in the mass communication profession know it very well. For instance, when the Mexican 'dispensarios' were called 'anti-leprosos' nobody came willingly,

patients or healthy people alike, even doctors were reluctant, sometimes, to come close' (Latapi, "Manejo del enfermo de lepra" *Dermatologia* (Mexico) 10(2) : 168-174, 1962). 'It is not necessary for the doctor to pronounce the word that he does not like if he can manage otherwise' (Latapi, id., *ibid.*)".

"Advocates of a modern terminology could hope that Prof. Latapi confirms his earlier viewpoints and offers his valuable contribution to wipe out 'the most negative of all medical terms' (Rolston & Chesteen)."

A. ROTBERG

São Paulo, Brazil