

## NEWS

### **Brazil adopts new measures to control hanseniasis based on the removal of the cultural barriers of "leprosy"**

The Brazilian Ministry of Health held a Preparatory Meeting (Hospital "Lauro de Souza Lima", Bauru, S. Paulo, Feb. 1975) and a National Conference to Assess the Policies of Hanseniasis Control (Brasilia, March, 1976). Participants of the Conference were public health officials, hansenologists, educators, social workers and nurses of the Ministry and all state Public Health Services.

The seven working groups and plenary session recognized:

- a) the insufficiency, in Brazil, of the policies internationally recommended to control the endemic;
- b) the extraordinary importance of the social problem related to "leprosy";
- c) the necessity of a continuous fight against stigma, sensationalism and misinformation, as well as against charities which reinforce prejudice in order to raise funds;
- d) the importance of a new, sane, educational and scientific terminology in order to sever the ties that bind the disease to an opprobrious past, to make rehabilitation and education work, and to frustrate sensationalism;
- f) the priority of the prevention of disabilities by *easy* techniques, as regards sophisticated and expensive reconstructive surgery;
- g) the importance of family planning, considering the teratogenicity of some drugs and the reactions and aggravations of the disease due to pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium;
- h) the urgency to bring to an end the activities of "leprosaria", "asylums" and "colonies", by transforming them into general hospitals and "hospitals of sanitary dermatology", and/or transferring them to other administrative areas (Social Welfare, Agriculture) ;
- i) the help that may be given by a body of private practitioners in covenant with health authorities ;
- j) the importance of the integrated health center, as basis of all preventive work;
- k) the importance of research, teaching, nursing, training of personnel, social and physical rehabilitation of patients;

- k) the necessity of new laws based on scientific progress;
- l) the peculiarities of the problem in the Amazonic area.

Installing the Conference, Minister Paulo de Almeida Machado said that "I believe a courageous reassessment of the policies of control of hanseniasis is necessary". "It is very probable that a new cold and objective appraisal would lead us to conclusions which might shock medieval prejudices and force us to disturbing options, if we wish to keep in peace with science, with our conscience, with our duty toward the people". "We must discuss, study and propose the innovations recommended by scientific progress". "It is possible that our conclusions will lead us to grievous fights". "Still more grievous

would be omission by timidity". "The endemic grows under the shade of timidity of those who know and the superstitious terror of those who do not know".

Few weeks after the Conference the recommendations whose execution depended solely on the action of the President and Ministry of Health were already being put into practice, and a new bill was issued setting norms to control hanseniasis in the country. Other measures depending on the action of Congress or other Ministries are being awaited.

The opening address of the Minister of Health and the conclusions and recommendations of the Conference are condensed, in English, in *Hanseniasis: abstracts and news* 7(1/2) 326-339, 1976.

### **Technical Norm N° 14 of the Secretariat of Health of the State of S. Paulo, Brazil, on treatment of hanseniasis**

A working group coordinated by Dr. T. A. ALVES DOS SANTOS and integrated by Drs. A. ROTBERG, D. V. A. OPROMOLLA, C. E. R. T. RUDGE, W. BELDA and R. C. NOBREGA was appointed by the Secretary of Health of S. Paulo, Prof. WALTER LESER, to revise Norm 1/70 on treatment of hanseniasis. The new norm eliminates drugs of inferior activity or unavailable (Thiosemicarbasone, Thiourea, Cicloserin and several derivatives of DDS), and introduces new ones.

DDS (100 mg/d for adults, 50 mg/d for children up to 10 years of age) is the basic treatment. If not absorbed or not tolerated, 200 mg of suspended DDS may be injected twice a week. Mitsuda-positive patients are treated until clinical inactivity, others for indetermined time. Optional drugs are

substituted in case of sulfone-resistance or intolerance :

1. Clofazimine, 200 mg/d. The patient should be warned about skin discoloration.
2. Long-acting sulfonamides. a) sulfadimetoxin, sulfametoxy-pyridazine and sulfametoxydiazine : 1g/d. b) sulfametoxy-pyrazine and sulfadoxine: 1,5 g once a week.
3. Antibiotics. a) Rifampicin, 600 mg/d, (recommended for virchovian patients, 3-4months.) b) Oxytetracyclin and doxicyclin in special circumstances.

Thalidomide (100 mg/d or higher doses) is the choice drug for hansenic reactions of virchovian cases, but its teratogenic action must be clearly ex-

plained to fertile women. Corticosteroids are recommended for serious nerve and eye reactions. Antimonials, antihistaminic, analgesic and antipyretic drugs may be useful.

Thalidomide is not recommended for reactional tuberculoid patients, who

will be treated with antimonials, antihistaminic, analgesic and antipyretic drugs, eventually combined with corticosteroids.

A list of commercial names completes the Norm.

### **"The Disease Hanseniasis" supersedes "The Neologism Hanseniasis"**

As a result of the adoption of the term "Hanseniasis" by the Brazilian Ministry of Health (Hansen: abst. news 6:20b, 1975) and the proscription of the term "leprosy" and its derivatives from the official language of the Ministry (Hansen: abst. news 7: 342, 1976), the mimeographed pamphlet "The Neologism Hanseniasis" will be superseded by a printed periodical, "The Disease Hanseniasis".

The change, proposed by A. ROTBERG, was successively approved by CASSIO MARCONDES -DE CARVALHO, Director of the Institute of Health; OTAVIO A. MERCADANTE, Coordinator of Technical Services, and

WALTER LESER, Secretary of Health of the State of São Paulo. The magazine will strive to make of "Hanseniasis" a "disease like the others" and will wage a continuous fight against ignorance, superstition and social rejection related to "Leprostigma".

The original articles in the first number of "The Disease Hanseniasis" are written by Brazilian authors, but the editors hope to receive contributions from all endemic countries where the pejorative "leprosy" or its local equivalents are hindering enlightenment of the public, social rehabilitation of the patients, and prevention of the disease.

### **College of Hansenology of Endemic Countries**

A group of Brazilian hansenologists (RABELLO, AZULAY, PEREIRA JR., GARRIDO NEVES, OPROMOLLA, TOLENTINO, PERNAMBUCO, ROTBERG), who met in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the symposium on "Hanseniasis and Internal Medicine", organized by F. E. A. RABELLO (14 Aug., 1976), discussed the possibility of founding a "College of Hansenology of Endemic Countries". The principal aims of the College would be integration of hanseniasis into the mainstream of modern medicine, study and elimination of all cultural barriers which are creating psycho-social problems and

hindering preventive efforts, and research in all scientific fields of the disease. The College would be open to professionals in the fields of Medicine, Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, Anthropology, History, Social Sciences, Nursing, Health Education, Communication and others who would wish to cooperate.

Members from non-endemic countries will be welcome.

CASSIO M. CARVALHO promptly offered the services of the three hansenological periodicals published by the Institute of Health ("Hansenoloiaia

Internationalis", "Hanseniasis : Abstracts and News" and "The Disease Hanseniasis"). This would minimize costs and the annual fee should not be over US\$ 10,00.

The First Congress of the College might be held in Brasilia (perhaps complemented in Rio de Janeiro), before the end of 1978.

The group wishes to contact all those who support the idea and hopes to

receive comments and suggestions. Please, show this notice to other persons and mail the clipping below to the principal organizer, R. D. AZULAY, Avenida Atlantica, 3130, 7.º — 701 — CEP 20.000 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, or to A. ROTBERG, CP 8027 — CEP 1.000 S. Paulo, Brazil.

All readers who agree with item 1 before June 30, 1977, will be considered Founders of the College.

- 1) We agree with the foundation of the College of Hansenology of Endemic Countries.
- 2) We do/do not plan to attend its 1st. Congress in Brasilia & Rio de Janeiro.

Print, please:

Name:.....

Position:.....

Address:.....