

## NEWS

### "HANSENIASIS AND REHABILITATION CENTRE" IN CAMEROON

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, West Africa, changed the name of the "Leprosy Hospital" into "Hanseniasis and Rehabilitation Centre". Dr. T. J. S. Kuindersma, Medical-Officer in charge, writes :

"In its 21st Meeting, held in Kumba, April 1978, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon changed the name of the Leprosy Hospital into: Hanseniasis and Rehabilitation Centre."

"The name Hanseniasis takes the place of the name 'leprosy' in the medical language and means as much as Dr. Hansen's infection, after the Norwegian scientist who discovered in 1874 the germ responsible for the disease. The name Hanseniasis stresses that the illness is an infection, in the same way as catarrh and pneumonia, and not a

curse, a punishment or caused by witchcraft. The name Hanseniasis takes leave of the names 'leprosy', 'lepers' and so on, as for instance used in the Bible, where these names have no medical meaning and may refer to conditions not caused by Hansen's bacilli. Hanseniasis is an infection which will be completely cured by regular treatment when started early enough and continued long enough!"

"With the change of name we extend our combat for the complete Rehabilitation and reinstatement of the Hanseniasis patients, We also offer certain means and services towards the Rehabilitation of victims of other diseases and traffic-accidents, for instance artificial legs and physiotherapy. In some cases of paralyses we can fit orthopaedic apparatuses."

### THE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE AND AN APPEAL TO THE CAMEROONIAN AUTHORITIES

On the 12th of April, 1978, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon changed the name of the Presbyterian Leprosy Hospital into : Hanseniasis and Rehabilitation Centre. The change of name had been proposed to

the governing bodies of the church for the following reasons :

The English language has but one name for the disease which is medically defined as an infection of man by

*Mycobacterium leprae*, — and other conditions, like for instance as defined in the Bible in Leviticus 13 as "the plague of leprosy". It is however clear that the biblical leprosy cannot be the same condition as Hansen's infection. Thus the name "leprosy" brings along very pejorative connotations stemming from religious opinions and other beliefs into the medical combat of the disease.

From my observation the name "leprosy" affects the patient's self-respect, thus reducing his sense of responsibility and inducing a negative resignation to his situation. Therefore it is in the interest of the curative efforts to leave the name "leprosy" for a non-pejorative name.

Having acknowledged this, tribute should be paid to Dr. Abrahao Rotberg, São Paulo, Brazil for his vigorous efforts to combat the stigma brought about by the name "leprosy". He introduced the new name "Hanseniase" in Portuguese and "Hanseniasis" in English. These names are the official names for Hansen's infection in Brazil

now. With the same aim patients of the Carville Public Health Services Hospital, Louisiana, United States of America, organized around their magazine "The Star", have succeeded to get the official terminology changed into Hansen's Disease.

Why not in Cameroon? The first reactions of the patients to the change of name express from relief to restrained enthusiasm. A new cheer: "Hanseniasis Oyay !" emerged spontaneously, cheering in fact the self-confidence of the patients. The population reacts with sympathy. From within Cameroon so far no negative reactions were encountered.

From this place we appeal to the Cameroonian authorities to change the official terminology, both in French from "la lèpre" into "la Hanséniase" and in English into "Hanseniasis". This will prove to be an essential step in educating the public and enhance both early detection and treatment. The related terminology falls without the scope of this report.

**From** the Annual Report (July 77-June 78) of the Hanseniasis and Rehabilitation Centre, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

(Tjeerd S. Kulndersma, Medical Officer in charge)

### PORTUGAL ENTERS PHASE III

Education, in first place, followed by prevention, therapy and rehabilitation, characterize the new policy against hanseniasis decreed by the Portuguese government (Rovisco Pais, 15:69-83, 1978).

The term "Hansen's disease" is officially "proposed to replace the one traditionally used". The "Institute for

Assistance of Lepers" is substituted by an "Institute for the Assistance of Hansen patients".

Education — and the necessary elimination of the counter-educational pejorative "leprosy" — are the principal marks of Phase III in the fight against hanseniasis. Portugal has entered this new phase.

## **VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS OF S. PAULO, BRAZIL, DISCARD STIGMATIZING NAMES**

The "Fundação Paulista Contra a Lepra" (founded in 1935) and the "Associação Paulista de Assistência ao Doente de Lepra" (founded in 1946) have decided to change their names to

"Fundação Paulista contra a Hanseníase" and "Associação Paulista de Assistência ao Doente de Hanseníase", respectively.

## **DOCTORAL THESIS APPROVED WITH THE HIGHEST MARK**

"Cell-mediated immunity in Mitsuda-negative hanseniasis patients, prior and after treatment with transfer factor" was the doctoral thesis recently presented to the Escola Paulista de Medicina (S. Paulo, Brazil) by the young

immunologist Paulo Guilherme Leser. The thesis was unanimously approved with the highest mark (10). An extended abstract of Dr. Leser's thesis was published in "Hanseniasis: Abstracts and News", 9: 45-46, 1978.

## **BRAZILIAN MINISTRIES OF HEALTH. AND OF SOCIAL WELFARE UNIFIED FOR THE CONTROL OF HANSENIASIS**

As a result of a bill signed on October, 1978 by Drs. Paulo de Almeida Machado and Luiz Gonzaga do Nascimento e Silva, respectively Ministers of Health and of Social Welfare of Brazil, the policies referring to hanseniasis

were unified. Action to prevent the disease (and incapacities) medical and paramedical attendance, social welfare measures and terminology ("hanseniasis") are now the same in both Ministries.

## **MEDICAL CERTIFICATES FOR HANSENIASIS PATIENTS**

A new "Norm" granting medical certificates for hanseniasis patients was approved by the Technical Administrative Council of the Public Health Service of the State of S. Paulo, Brazil (October 12, 1978). In accordance with the new Brazilian program for hanseniasis control, patients will continue working for as long as possible. Defor-

mities and other sequels alone will not be sufficient to declare their "general incapacity". Only some open cases of the Virchowian type, after close study of the circumstances by a hansenologist might be declared ineligible to work as teachers and caretakers of minors, domestic servants, paramedical attendants (except in specialized services) and food handlers or dispensers.

## **"HANSENIASIS: ABSTRACTS AND NEWS" TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED**

Rapidly increasing costs of printing and mailing have seriously affected the capacity of the Institute of Health of the Public Health Service of S. Paulo, Brazil, to publish more than one hansenological periodical. Therefore, "Han

seniasis: abstracts and news" temporarily ceased publication, after Vol. 9, 1978 was distributed. Starting from Vol. 4. (2) : 1979, "Hansenologia Internationalis" will publish selected abstracts of the world hansenological literature and enlarge its "News" section.

## **CHANGES IN THE COLLEGE OF HANSENOLOGY**

Following medical advice, Dr. Abra-  
hão Rotberg has resigned from the  
Organizing Committee of the College of  
Hansenology of the Endemic Countries  
and of its First International Congress  
of Hansenology, to be held in Brazil,

1980. All correspondence referring to  
the College and Congress, as well as  
requests for membership, should be  
directed to Prof. Rubem D. Azulay,  
Avenida Atlântica 3130, apt. 701 —  
20.000 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

## **II BRAZILIAN CONGRESS OF HANSENOLOGY**

The 2nd Brazilian Congress of Han-  
senology was presided over by Prof.  
René Garrido Neves (Rio de Janeiro,  
June/July 1978). A few of the papers

presented are published in this issue  
of "Hansenologia Internationalis". All  
others will be condensed or abstracted  
for our coming issue.