Editor’s Choice – December 2017

Methods to improve the efficiency of leprosy case-finding activities are always of interest, as the time and effort that health workers can devote to them declines. A paper from Lepra’s partners in Bihar, India shows that conscious efforts to focus these activities on those most at risk will pay dividends.

The main at risk group (contacts of newly diagnosed cases) was also the focus of a recent meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, where the third annual meeting of LPEP took place. A report of the meeting is published in this issue. LPEP is a study looking at post-exposure prophylaxis in leprosy, supported by the Novartis Foundation and managed by National Programmes of participating countries and their ILEP partners. I was fortunate to be able to attend the meeting and was struck by the optimism surrounding this study, which has clearly shown the operational feasibility of chemoprophylaxis with single-dose rifampicin. As the authors state, scaling up this intervention within routine programmes will be a major challenge.

Drug resistance in leprosy is a potential problem requiring ongoing surveillance. A reassuring paper from Malaysia reviews results of mouse foot-pad studies over a 16 year period, with only a small amount of rifampicin resistance detected.

Erythema Nodosum Leprosum is a chronic condition that remains one of the most difficult complications of leprosy to manage effectively. Trials of treatment with methotrexate are being started by the ENLIST group, but in the meantime we publish two studies, also from the ENLIST consortium, showing how quality of life may be adversely affected. Most facets of life are affected and patients need comprehensive support.

Finally, an intriguing case report describes an unusual presentation of ENL occurring at more or less the same time in two brothers, raising questions both about a possible genetic predisposition, as well as common environmental factors that may have acted as triggers.

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Editor