Editor’s Choice

Particularly for those on the Editorial Board of this journal, the assembly and publication of this issue has been overshadowed by the news of the sudden and tragic death of Jo Colston, whose obituary appears in the following pages. We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife and children and his wide range of colleagues and friends.

Writing from the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine in Oxford, UK, Jo Robertson’s Editorial describes the origin, development and main activities to date of the International Leprosy Association Global Project on the History of Leprosy, including the creation of a website and database, which already carry a vast amount of information on the location of leprosy records, research (past and present), names of people involved in leprosy work, treatment, legislation and epidemiology. The good news is that it is now planned to extend and fund this project for a further 3 years, during which we hope to keep readers up to date on further progress on an initiative that clearly has the potential to become one of the most important sources of information on the history of leprosy worldwide.

Our original articles give further evidence of the continuing global interest in leprosy control and research in many different countries; Van Dijk and colleagues write from the Netherlands on guidelines for ‘client satisfaction’, pre-tested in Nepal and Brasil; Withington et al. on the assessment of socio-economic factors in Bangladesh, with a co-author from New Zealand. The following article on the relative recurrence risk for leprosy has authors in London and Cambridge, based on observations from Malawi. The series continues with two articles from India, one on Guyana from authors based in London and Cornwall and ends with Ruth Butlin’s contribution on the Network of Leprosy Non-Government Organizations in Nepal. We greatly appreciate the strong flow of articles for publication from so many different leprosy endemic countries. Please keep in touch and remember that we are always open to suggestions for editorials, discussion papers, ideas—anything, indeed, which will enhance the value of this journal in ‘... contributing to the better understanding of leprosy and its control’.

Finally, dear Reader, if your strength fails you, do not fail to study the information on page 188, under News and Notes: ‘Leprosy elimination campaigns; impact on case detection’. As a result of these campaigns, over 1 million new cases of leprosy have been detected and treated since 1995. But note that despite the gains and achievements, WHO records in this week’s Epidemiological Record that there is ‘... an alarming increase in the number of new cases detected in some major endemic countries ...’ and describes it as a matter of serious concern. Time, as so often, will tell, but meanwhile we should surely give this disconcerting situation the attention it deserves and we hope to return to it in future issues of Leprosy Review.

A. Colin Mcdougall
(Deputy Editor)