Preface to Special Issue

One fine day in 2005, while I was in London attending the European Academy of Dermato-venerology meeting, I got a message from Diana Lockwood with the proposal to edit a special issue of *Leprosy Review*. The subject, ‘Role of dermatologists in the elimination of leprosy and post-elimination era’, seemed to have been chosen with diligence, as its importance had mounted especially after the integration of leprosy care with the general health services. I also concurred, realizing that the subject was very interesting and of growing significance in the post-elimination era. Though the contribution of the dermatologists in teaching, training and care of the disease and the sufferers was never suspect, the extent of the involvement and the resultant fall out in containing the disease was likely to elicit different views. Considering all this, I accepted the offer and thanked Diana for the honour. I was mercifully allowed to choose for help some prominent contributors from the field. I chose Ben and Sunil to help me, Ben because of his vast experience and for local support from my previous and learned colleague, I chose Sunil. I must say I was proven right in my choice and I relished working with them.

I am sure Professor Lockwood chose the subject being alive to the current issues involving the disease, out of her commitment to the disease and her love for the journal and her desire to maintain its freshness. Maybe because she had frequent interactions with the dermatologists, being invited often by the dermatologists to enlighten them on leprosy, so she felt genuinely for the dermatologists and decided on this subject for the special issue. Why she chose me for the job would remain an enigma for me but I did not ask her lest she change her mind.

We (me, Ben and Sunil) started the job in the right earnest, rather early and to give wider publicity to get the maximum number of articles. Requests for articles were inserted in the *Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology* and the *Indian Journal of Dermatology* and posted the appeal on their websites. Professor Lockwood had already made a mention of it in the March 2006 issue of *Leprosy Review*. We also sent personal requests to many specialists around the globe to contribute. Honestly, we were expecting many more contributions than what we actually got. The subject we thought was not very straight and so we expected different and even contrary views. To our surprise, almost everybody agreed (to variable degrees) that the dermatologists did a good job in reducing the burden of the disease through teaching and training paramedical workers, nurses, medical officers and dermatology residents and also by managing efficiently leprosy patients with complications of all kinds. What a satisfying revelation for all the dermatologists caring for the disease leprosy and its sufferers. I am sure this recognition is enough to infuse further enthusiasm and stimulate the dermatologists to do even better in the ’post-elimination era’ when the committed and dedicated experts in leprosy and the devoted and tireless field workers would be in short supply. The opinions are there, dear readers for you to agree, disagree or to even stay neutral.

Thanks to you Diana for giving us this opportunity and to your team Ms Allen and Dr Boobis, in bringing out this dedicated issue and giving an opportunity to all the contributors to express themselves.

*Bhushan Kumar*
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