

## Editor's choice – March 2015

This issue of *Leprosy Review* has three key themes which reflect important areas for discussion and development by all of us engaged in leprosy work.

The first theme is the relationship between leprosy and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), which will be very important in future, not only in terms of funding for national programmes, but also in the implementation of control programmes at district and community levels. The Editorial by Walsh *et al.* describes the many ways in which leprosy and Buruli ulcer overlap, and discusses ways in which efficiency can be gained by combining our efforts. The Short Report on Mozambique illustrates how many countries, especially in Africa, are struggling to coordinate the structural change of a new department for NTDs at Ministry of Health level with the practical needs for high quality service provision on the ground.

The second theme concerns the relationship between health staff and their patients. Raju *et al.* have looked at the reasons why some patients in India fail to complete treatment with MDT, with some interesting conclusions. Teasdale *et al.* asked patients in Brazil about their experiences when diagnosed with leprosy. Both papers demonstrate the need for better communication with patients at the time of diagnosis. Also on the topic of communicating with patients, Lusli *et al.* show how lay and peer counselors in Indonesia can help people with leprosy deal with the social problems they face; this is an exciting development that could be tested in other programmes. Seshadri *et al.* remind us that, even in the post-elimination phase, leprosy is still a very debilitating disease for a sizable proportion of those affected, thus emphasising the need to maintain the highest possible quality of care, including effective communication. A final word on the issue of communication is to mention the Obituary of Dr Margaret Brand, who showed us what effective communication really looks like in the doctor-patient relationship.

The third theme I would like to mention is contact management and chemoprophylaxis. Three letters are published in relation to an Editorial by Smith and Aerts in March last year, debating the merits of post-exposure prophylaxis in contacts of new cases. Interestingly, the paper by Liangbin *et al.* shows that 80% of children who get leprosy in China have a family contact, suggesting that post-exposure prophylaxis may be just as worthwhile in low endemic areas; it would also be very cost-effective because the numbers of cases are low to begin with. Further letters are, of course, welcome on this and any other topic.

*Paul Saunderson*  
Editor