Editor’s Choice

Our third issue for 2003 opens with a detailed overview by Linda Oskam and colleagues of the place of serology, notably in the detection of antibodies, in leprosy, covering its strengths, weaknesses and the prospects for new developments in the future. The currently used ELISA, based on the use of PGL-1 derived antigens for the detection of *Mycobacterium leprae* IgM antibodies, is suitable for research purposes and in reference laboratories, but the newly developed rapid tests now hold promise for the incorporation of serology into peripheral health care and leprosy control programmes. Meanwhile, further research is needed and may throw light on the mechanism of transmission of leprosy and the identification of new antigens, especially for the early prediction of reactions.

The following eight papers include studies of thalidomide (Ethiopia and USA), assessment of disability, socio-economic situations and the role of leprosy villages and leprosaria (People’s Republic of China), treatment outcomes during leprosy elimination campaigns (Mozambique and The Netherlands), screening for leprosy in immigrants (Australia), delayed diagnosis (Brazil), field treatment of reactions (Nigeria) and comparison of PGL-1 serology and the Mitsuda reaction (Brazil and Germany), yet again reflecting the wide-ranging subject matter currently being submitted to *Leprosy Review*, with a strong element of international cooperation between authors.

No doubt following the XVI International Leprosy congress in Brazil in 2002, it is particularly encouraging to note the increase in the number of papers from authors in various parts of that large country, still facing a significant problem in the control of leprosy. It bears repetition that this journal thrives on international contacts of this kind and the submission of original papers, letters, reviews or case studies that contribute to improvement in patient care and the effectiveness of control programmes.

Richard Smith, Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, recently wrote that, in contrast to ‘skimming through’ the pages of a journal, much insight, and even pleasure, can be had from ‘... reading articles slowly, savouring every thought, word and nuance.’ We cannot offer all these pleasures in every number, but this one has food for thought on almost every page, which, dear Reader, we hope will encourage you to contribute your observations and ideas for publication.

A. Colin McDougall  
(Acting Editor)