

BOOK REVIEW

Action Programme for the Elimination of Leprosy. *Guide to Eliminating Leprosy as a Public Health Problem.* Geneva: World Health Organization, 1995. Softbound, 60 pp. Order from World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

We have never come so close to seeing leprosy conquered. Even though the disease continues to afflict a large number of people, it is now possible to eliminate it as a public health problem. As a result of the very encouraging results from 10 years' intensive use of treatment based on a combination of antileprosy drugs, known as multidrug therapy (MDT), the World Health Assembly in 1991 resolved to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem by the year 2000. Later, a WHO Working Group on Leprosy outlined the strategy for eliminating the disease and, since then, practically all the major endemic countries have implemented action plans to eliminate the disease.

The central part of the elimination strategy is to make the WHO-recommended MDT accessible to all patients, including those living in difficult to reach areas and populations.

The purpose of this Guide is to enable every health worker in endemic countries to contribute to the historic task of reaching all leprosy patients with MDT and attaining

the goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem. Although the Guide is likely to be useful for health workers at all levels, it is targeted mainly at those who have major responsibilities for organizing and implementing leprosy work in the field. It can be used both as self-learning material as well as material for training courses.

The Guide aims to give a clear picture of what needs to be done to implement MDT and attain the elimination goal. It does not attempt to cover every aspect of the disease and is certainly not meant to replace textbooks on leprosy. Only the most important concepts are discussed and details of action to be taken, including technical steps, are given. Users may refer to the documents listed at the end of the Guide for further information.

The Guide has been prepared through contributions from Dr. M. Virmond, Brazil, and the staff of the Action Programme for the Elimination of Leprosy at WHO Headquarters in Geneva. Acknowledgment is made to the various WHO publications and documents on leprosy and leprosy elimination, and suggestions from a number of experts and institutions.—From the Preface by S. K. Noordeen, Director, Action Programme for the Elimination of Leprosy (LEP), WHO