

Presentation

The Brazilian Unified National Health System (SUS), now in its 20th year of existence, can celebrate many important advances over this period while also recognizing the significant challenges that still must be faced, such as the endemic diseases that affect various regions of the country. Still, we have a long way to go if we intend to honor the principles of universal coverage, equality, integrated health care and user participation that guided the formulation of the SUS national health policy.

The control of Hansen' disease is one of the highest priorities for the Brazilian government and its federal ministry of health, given that it is an endemic disease with the strong potential to cause physical disabilities. The incidence of the disease is still quite high in our country, despite the fact that the first signs of a real downward trend are appearing.

It should be emphasized that the success of Hansen' disease control activities does not depend on a few political decisions made by the government, but rather on the commitment of its partners, the full use of our potential and our ability to take advantage of the country's great capacity to work in order to be able to change the current reality.

Even though there is no vaccine that would allow us to dream of a world without Hansen' disease in the near future, no effort will be spared to ensure that we have a strong leprosy control program in Brazil; a program based on the early diagnosis and treatment of the disease with integrated health care for patients, thereby allowing all Brazilians to live a rich and fulfilled life in their communities.

In this spirit we would like to present the commemorative edition of the Journal of the Brazilian Society of Tropical Medicine on *the use of serology and molecular biology in the control of Hansen' disease* in this, the 20th anniversary of the SUS. It contains 19 articles that detail the research in these areas, most of which was undertaken within the SUS itself, demonstrating the quality of scientific output produced by Brazilian health professionals and researchers located in national health facilities.

We are certain that this publication will make a valuable contribution to leprosy control in Brazil.

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