

## **MYCOBACTERIUM LEPRAE IN CHRONIC PATIENTS**

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**Introduction:** The Chronic Diseases Infirmery of West Attica (CDIWA) has been functioning as a reception - therapy and permanent residence center (Leprosarium) of patients suffering from Hansen's disease since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such patients after diagnosis were compulsorily isolated in country's Leprosariums and gradually marginalized.

**Materials-Methods:** Currently, 41 patients with mean age 69,5 years (ranging from 40 to 96 years) are hospitalized in CDIWA. Of them 26 are female and 15 male, while 39 are Greeks and 2 are foreigners (Philippine, Brazil). It is well known that Mycobacterium leprae can't be cultivated in any culture media. The preferred method for laboratory diagnosis in early stage is the microscopic examination (using Ziehl-Neelsen staining) of nasal smears while in case of skin lesions we take smear from the suspicious lesions. Such lesions are usually found in limbs (elbows, buttocks), belly and scapula.

**Results:** Only one of the 41 patients has active disease, namely a 40-years old woman from Philippines. The disease was diagnosed in October of 2006 and the case history showed that the patient had already suffered from the disease when she first came in Greece. In 3/10/2006 a sample from belly's lesion was positive and the bacteriological index according to Ridley was 2+ (1-10 mycobacterium/10 optical fields). The first treatment included: Rifampicin, Minocycline, and Ofloxacin. In 4/01/07 a sample from the same area was positive with bacteriological index 5+ (100-1000 mycobacterium/25 o.f). This was considered as a treatment failure, consequently Ofloxacin was replaced with Clofazimine. In 13/3/07, another sample was found positive with bacteriological index 4+ (10-100 mycobacterium/25 o.f.). The same treatment is being administered up to now.

**Conclusions:** Although in 99% of patients clinical as well as laboratory findings are negative, patients are chronic inmates of the infirmery owing to social and economic exclusion. They exhibit usually a deformed countenance (the so-called lion face), while many of them suffer from kidney and liver disorders, resulting to continuous need of medical care. The mean age of inmates, as high as 69,5 years, may be considered impressive, while the average infirmery residence of 44 years is almost shocking.