Leprosy trends:
And factors which influence them

17th International Leprosy Congress
Hyderabad, India
01 Feb, 2008

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Leprosy trends:

• Complicated subject
  – 10 minutes of oversimplification

• Divide into 5 historical periods

• Comment on major issues at end
Leprosy trends - era 1

Pre-dapsone era (< 1950)
• Geographic spread worldwide
  – All continents…. tropics to Arctic Circle
  – Very few data

• Disappearance from northern Europe
  – Attributed to socio-economic development (?)
  – Norway paradigm
    • Shift to older age groups
    • “lepromatous disease

• (Subsequent geographic trends ?? !!)

Leprosy trends – era 2

Dapsone era (1950 - 1981)
• Expansion of leprosy programmes
  – WHO, NGOs, ILEP
  – gradual improvement of data

• Registers in many countries
  – cases typically registered for life
  – emphasis on prevalence
    • Cumulative increases in many countries with time
Leprosy trends – era 3

MDT Introduction era (1981 - 1991)
- Massive reduction in prevalence
  - removal of cases after MDT completion
  - removal of spurious cases

Leprosy trends – era 4

- Emphasis upon 1/10,000 prevalence target
- Elimination of research and of smaller programmes
- Changing policies in many countries
  - case finding, registration, classification….
- Examples of data manipulation to attain target
  - controversy and confusion
Reported trends since 1985: “new cases” and “prevalence”

Data, PvsI, MDT, I, target

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Can not interpret these data without full details of operational factors

Influences on leprosy incidence

**True:**
- Socio-economic improvement
  - leprosy associated with poor
  - how this works is unclear ….
- BCG
  - variable protection but widespread use
- Case finding and treatment
  - must have some effect but difficult to show
    (unless naso-pharyngeal carriage is key ?)

**Possible:**
- Environmental changes ??

**Spurious:**
- Policies and politics
  - harsh lessons of recent years
Leprosy trends – era 5

“Post elimination” era 2006 -

• Need for stable, quality data for surveillance – essential for public health

• Shift to new case detection monitoring and emphasis on sustainability in Global Strategy 2006-2011

• Challenges of integration and reduced funding – Need to emphasise truth, not targets