

Cohesion Devices

Leprosy, an ancient disease, is soon going to be eliminated if ongoing efforts are continued. **However**, some health officials are concerned that government health organizations have forgotten about leprosy **because** they have so many other new diseases to worry about. **Additionally**, treatment is not available to all lepers, or people who have leprosy, **due to** inability to pay for the medical costs. Some 600,000 people per year are diagnosed with leprosy, **which** seems to be found mostly in humid, tropical, and subtropical countries. The countries with the most reported cases are India, Brazil, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma, and Nigeria. **These** six countries account for 85% of the diseased individuals worldwide.

There are two types of leprosy, the tuberculoid type and the lepromatous type. **The most common of the two** is the lepromatous, or cutaneous type. The highly visible symptoms of **this form of leprosy** are caused by nerve-attacking bacteria called *microbacterium leprae bacillus*, **which** result in nerve and skin decay; the disease may **also** involve inflammation of the eyes, testes, and the mucous membranes of the nose and pharynx. **The complications** of the disease eventually cause the nerves to be completely destroyed, lack of sensation in the extremities, and loss of flesh. **In severe cases**, people lose their fingers, toes, hands, and even their legs. They **also** develop lesions in the upper respiratory tract.

If untreated, the prognosis is poor, but leprosy is treatable and has been treatable for many years. **The treatment**, similar to chemotherapy for cancer, utilizes a multi-drug therapy, which can cure a patient within 2 years. **However**, in the past, people were put into isolation, cast out from society. **They** often found that their families did not want to take them into their homes, even after being cured. **This ignorance** may have been due to the fact that the method of transmission of the disease was unclear. It is **now** known that one method of transmission is via long-term contact with a diseased individual **although** physical closeness or contact does not always transmit the disease. **Another** possible method of transmission is from infectious needles. **Interestingly enough**, children born to lepers are not infected at birth **and** will not get the disease **if** they are taken away from the parent immediately.

Only 20 years ago, there were 20 million cases of leprosy. **Today, however**, only 3.1 million cases are recorded; as a result, more attention is being given to serious diseases **that** are not curable, **such as** AIDS. **Nevertheless**, leprosy remains a major health problem. **It** could be eliminated by the end of the decade, **but** it needs the resources of health agencies and financial donors to completely eliminate **it**.