

## ABSTRACT

Even with the constant decline in the incidence of Hansen's disease in Jamaica and declared elimination status in 1981, there is still a high percentage of patients being registered with multibacillary type of Hansen's disease and with disabilities at the time of diagnosis. This increase is noted, at a time when the global focus is on Hansen's disease eradication by the year 2000.

Young adults are the group most at risk for Hansen's disease and its complications. Delayed diagnoses have resulted in an increase in deformities. Men are more prone to disabilities and the severe type of the disease ( $RR=1.00$ ). Children have been diagnosed with the multibacillary type of the disease.

A retrospective study was conducted, over the period 1982 to 1996, in order to analyse the disability trends and what it means for the Hansen's disease control programme in Jamaica.

It was demonstrated that among the 88 patients graded 42% had disability, of which the most common was that of the hand ( $OR = 5.33$   $p = 0.03$ ).

These findings indicate that there is an urgent need for active case finding of Hansen's disease patients in Jamaica. Early case finding must be seen as the key to an effective 'prevention of disability' programme.