## A Message from the Editor

I am very pleased to take the reins as Acting Editor of *Public Health Reports*. I am also very lucky to have worked with Bob Rinsky for three months to learn the ways of the Journal before his retirement on December 31, 2007. As you know, Bob was the Editor of *PHR* from 2000 through 2007. It was his passion, energy, and strong leadership that enhanced the scientific caliber, relevance, objectivity, and independence of *PHR* and secured its place as a well-respected journal of public health.

Before his career at PHR, Bob was a research epidemiologist at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among Bob's most important NIOSH work was his groundbreaking epidemiologic research in associating leukemia with workplace exposure to benzene. His published research findings not only showed a significant cause-and-effect relationship between exposure and disease mortality, but also found a significant dose-response relationship. This groundbreaking research not only formed the basis of a national standard for workplace exposure to benzene that remains in place to date, but was also the basis of a fundamental change in national policy for rulemaking by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Before the benzene rulemaking, OSHA was not required to show a dose-response relationship in its substance-specific rulemaking efforts. Based on two industry challenges to the revised benzene standard, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all future OSHA substance-specific standards demonstrate an expected reduction in risk to the worker commensurate with the reduction in the permissible exposure limit. This is known today as a quantitative risk assessment. Most researchers would be happy with one legacy in their careers, but Bob has had two legacies—a national policy on benzene and Editor of *PHR*.

This issue of *PHR* has a number of very interesting articles, including an excellent group of five articles and a photo essay on leprosy that were coordinated by the Guest Editors, Drs. Brian Bennett, David Parker, and Mark Robson. Leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease affecting one million to two million people worldwide. Although there has been a 90% decrease in the global prevalence of leprosy since the 1980s, leprosy remains one of the leading causes of deformity and disability, as graphically shown in the photo essay. Although early treatment can prevent or limit the effects of this disease, leprosy will likely remain a public health problem for many decades because of accompanying physical disability and persistent social stigma. Nonetheless, there remains hope that, as has happened with smallpox, leprosy is now on the verge of global elimination.

Readers of *PHR* should be made aware of the National Hansen's Disease Program (NHDP) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which is devoted solely to the treatment, rehabilitation, training, and research of leprosy. NHDP manages about 3,300 U.S. leprosy patients through its inpatient and referral facilities, clinics, and private physician consultation. NHDP also maintains the national leprosy patient registry, oversees the world's largest multidisciplinary leprosy research program, and provides comprehensive clinical training. Additional information on NHDP can be found at: http://www.hrsa.gov/hansens.

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