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## LEPROSY ON TATTOOS

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**Aim:** To study the leprosy patients with lesion/s starting after and over tattoo designs

**Method:** The leprosy patients attending Dermatology dept. of a large hospital, the district leprosy unit and villages camps in periphery between January 1984 to December 2014, were the subjects of this observational study. Those with leprosy lesions starting after and over tattoos were selected.

**Results / Discussion:** A total of 8739 leprosy patients (3219 females) were seen, the age varying between 16-72 years. Multibacillary leprosy was observed in 2617 (29.94%) and the rest had paucibacillary leprosy. Many of female patients (65 %) had single/multiple tattoo designs, commonly on the limbs. All had undergone unhygienic, shared needle tattooing 5 to 23 years earlier mostly at the roadside/weekly markets. Forty-nine females had developed leprosy lesion/s, starting over the tattoos. Detailed clinical, slit smear and histopathological examination was done. The reason for tattooing and procedure details if available, were noted. Forty three had paucibacillary leprosy, and single leprosy lesions were localized to single tattoo design in 29 cases. Efforts were made to dispel myths amongst the village women (who presume that tattoos make the post-earthly existence smoother) and also to educate tattoo artists of such risks and about preventive measures.

**Conclusion:** The onset of leprosy lesion after and at the site of tattoos, localization of single leprosy lesion to single tattoo design in many and histological confirmation, suggest the possibility of inoculation leprosy through unhygienic, shared needle tattooing, specially in highly endemic regions for leprosy.