Leprosy is a chronic disease caused by a bacillus, *Mycobacterium leprae*. Official figures (WHO) show that more than 213,000 people mainly in Asia and Africa are infected, with approximately 249,000 new cases reported in 2008. *M. leprae* multiplies very slowly and the incubation period of the disease is about five years. Symptoms can take as long as 20 years to appear. Leprosy is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases. Untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes. Early diagnosis and treatment with multidrug therapy (MDT) remain the key elements in eliminating the disease as a public health concern. In 2007, India was contributing about 54% of new cases detected globally during the year 2007, and this trend was supposed to continue for some more years.

The National Leprosy Control Programme was launched by the Government of India in 1955. Multi Drug Therapy came into wide use from 1982 and the National Leprosy Eradication Programme was launched in 1983. Since then, remarkable progress has been achieved in reducing the disease burden. India achieved the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem, defined as less than 1 case per 10,000 population, at the National level in the month of December 2005 as set by the National Health Policy, 2002. Here is the current position: (Source Ministry of Health, data is of January 2009) 29 states/UTs have achieved leprosy elimination status 6 States/UTs viz. Bihar, Chattisgarh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chandigarh and D&D Haveli are yet to achieve elimination. With 87,206 leprosy cases on record at end of March 2008, the prevalence rate was 0.74/10,000 population. During 2007-08, a total of 1.38 lakhs new leprosy cases were detected giving Annual New Case Detection Rate of 11.70 per lakh population. All the newly detected cases were put under treatment. During 2008-09 (upto November 2008), 94,794 new leprosy cases were detected and put under treatment. 1353 reconstructive operations were performed for correction of disability among leprosy affected persons during April to November 2008. Out of 85,176 cases discharged during April to November 2008, 78808 cases (92.5%) were released as cured after completing treatment.

Biography
Abha Aggarwal, PhD (Statistics), and Fellow of the Society for Medical Statistics. She is working as Scientist F at the National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS), Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, INDIA. She has more than thirty five years experience of Research and professional teaching in various areas of Medical Sciences and carrying out research studies with numerous research publications in National/International Journals to her credit. She has a vast expertise in the areas of Sampling Design, Statistical Techniques in Epidemiology and designing of Clinical Trials. She has developed snowball sampling and inverse sampling techniques for the research studies on ‘Estimation of Maternal Mortality’ and ‘Leprosy at National level’. Inverse sampling for estimation of disease burden is a landmark in the history of leprosy program as no one has used this technique. She is also the National Coordinator for the Clinical Trials Registry-India hosted at NIMS and in this capacity she is monitoring and supervising the registry.

She has guided several Medical Scientists, PhD and PG students for designing of their Research Studies and thesis. She is actively involved in the Protocol Design and data analysis of numerous clinical trials being conducted in various research institutions. She has been a recipient of the Young Scientist award, Sukhame award and BG Prasad awards of ISMS society for her research work on Epidemiology and Nutrition.