

Terminology related to hansen's disease*

*A terminologia relativa à hanseníase**

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Abstract: The international standardization of diseases is a complex process that requires a specialized team. The aim of this work is to clarify and suggest some corrections for a probable misunderstanding during the translation of ICD-10 code A30 into Portuguese, in which the terms borderline and dimorfo (dimorphous) are used as different subcategories and not as synonyms; moreover, the designation lepromatosa (lepromatous) should be replaced by virchoviana (virchowian) considering that in Brazil, the word lepra (leprosy) was abolished from official texts by a Federal Act in 1995.

Keywords: International classification of diseases; Leprosy; Terminology

Resumo: A padronização internacional de doenças é um processo complexo que necessita de uma equipe especializada. Esta comunicação visa a esclarecer e sugerir correções de um provável equívoco na tradução, para o português da CID-10, do código A30, no qual os termos "borderline" e "dimorfo" são utilizados como subcategorias distintas e não como sinônimos, assim como substituir a designação "lepromatosa" por "virchoviana" pois, no Brasil, o vocábulo "lepra" foi abolido dos textos oficiais, por uma lei federal em 1995.

Palavras-chave: Classificação internacional de doenças; Hanseníase; Terminologia

Classifying means to distribute into classes and in their respective groups, according to a classification system or method; to put in a certain order; to sort out. Classifying a disease is a manner to know it better. The more knowledge about a disease, the more its classification changes and is completed.¹

The standardization of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) dates back to the 18th century and it is periodically reviewed by several World Health Organization (WHO) collaborating centers from various countries. The review provides new term updating, better systematization of diseases to improve diagnosis, and inclusion of new pathologies found out.²

The classification of leprosy adopted by the 10th Review of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems - ICD-10, was approved by the WHO ICD-10 International Conference, in 1989, and sanctioned by the 43rd World Health Assembly. It is encoded A30 and employs the nomenclature used in Ridley-Jopling classification³ for this disease. The current translation into Portuguese presents the following:²

A30 Hansen's disease [leprosy]

It includes: infection by *Mycobacterium leprae*

It excludes: sequela of Hansen's disease (B92)

A30.0 Indetermined Hansen's disease [leprosy]

Hansen's disease I

A30.1 Tuberculoid Hansen's disease [leprosy]

TT Hansen's disease [leprosy]

A30.2 Borderline tuberculoid Hansen's disease [leprosy]

BT Hansen's disease [leprosy]

A30.3 Dimorphous Hansen's disease [leprosy]

Hansen's disease [leprosy]:

- BB

- borderline

A30.4 Borderline lepromatous Hansen's disease [leprosy]

BL Hansen's disease [leprosy]

A30.5 Lepromatous Hansen's disease [leprosy]

LL Hansen's disease [leprosy]

A30.8 Other forms of Hansen's disease [leprosy]

A30.9 Unspecified Hansen's disease [leprosy]

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The following recommendations are made regarding this document:

1. The terms *borderline* and *dimorfo* (dimorphous) are used as distinct subcategories, although having the same meaning.

2. In **A30.2**, *borderline* is the English term and *dimorfo* (dimorphous) is the corresponding term in Portuguese; therefore, the word *borderline* should, at least, be written enclosed in inverted commas, and the acronym for this subcategory should be **DT**.

3. In **A30.3** the main terminology is correct. However, why is there a colon? And why are the acronym BB and the word *borderline* used as sub-items? In this case, the term could come be enclosed in inverted commas as a sub-item, but as a simple correspondence to the term *dimorfo* (dimorphous) in Portuguese. Hence, the acronym used should be **DD**.

4. In **A30.4**, apart from the same considerations about the term *borderline*, which should be replaced by *dimorfo* (dimorphous), the term *lepromatosa* (lepromatous) should not be used according to Law No. 9,010. This law provides replacing the term *lepromatosa* (lepromatous) by *virchovian* (virchowian) and the acronym for this subcategory should be **DV**.

5. In **A30.5**, the word *lepromatosa* (lepromatous) by *virchovian* (virchowian) should be replaced by *virchovian* (virchowian), for the same reasons mentioned above, and the corresponding acronym should be **VV**.

These misunderstandings might be related not only to the Portuguese translation, but also to the nomenclature implemented as of the 1970's, which

aimed to reduce the stigma of this disease, when Prof. Abrão Rotberg proposed replacing the term *lepra* (leprosy) by *hanseníase* (Hansen's disease).⁵

This change put forwarded by Prof. Abrão Rotberg was corroborated by the Secretary of Health of the State of Sao Paulo at that time, Prof. Valter Leser and by the technical committee of this agency. The Secretariat published a resolution determining the creation of a new vocabulary to classify this disease, in December 1970.⁶ Since then, the disease officially became *hanseníase* (Hansen's disease) for the Secretariat of Health of the State of Sao Paulo.⁵

In 1975, The Ministry of Health adopted the term *hanseníase* (Hansen's disease) according to the Decree No. 76,078, of August 4, 1975 (published in the Official Union Gazette - DOU, of August 5, 1975),⁷ during President Geisel term.⁸

Gradually this new terminology was accepted by other health services; on March 29, 1995, the Federal Law No. 9,010 made **compulsory** the use of the term *hanseníase* (Hansen's disease) instead of *lepra* (leprosy).

Having said that, and since the Ministry of Health and the official documents related to leprosy complied with the Madrid classification (1953)⁹ and used the ICD-10 A30 code and its subcategories,¹⁰ we suggest reviewing this terminology and the use of terms to classify it in ICD-10, in the Portuguese version, as provided in Law No. 9,010. □

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