4.1 Natural history of Leprosy

Learning Objectives: At the end of the session trainees will be able to

- Describe the natural history of the disease.

Training Methodology: Lecture Discussion using power-point presentation
Onset of leprosy is insidious. It usually affects nerves and skin but can affect any part of the body except central nervous system. Bacilli enter the body through upper respiratory tract. The bacilli have affinity for cooler parts of the body like peripheral nerves and skin.

Only a small proportion of infected people develop the disease. Further progress of the disease depends on the immunological status of the infected person. It may self-heal or progress to PB or MB disease. Risk for leprosy reaction (acute inflammatory episode) and development of disability (due to nerve dysfunction) is higher in patients with MB leprosy.

Infection may progress to disease or disease may worsen during pregnancy due to change in immunological status. Even though there is no correlation between HIV and leprosy, lepra reaction may sometimes become more apparent in leprosy cases co infected with HIV and under treatment with Anti Retroviral therapy.

**Prognosis of leprosy is good if**
- Detected early and treated with MDT.
- Inadequate treatment leads to higher chances of developing disability