

ISNTD FESTIVAL 2017

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Barbican Centre London



Patrons' Challenges & Hackathon

The Leprosy Mission England & Wales Challenge

The challenge

Issue today: Educating individuals and communities, raising awareness of leprosy and its treatment is key to the work we do. If we can bust the myths about leprosy and ensure people are aware of the early signs and symptoms, and know it can be cured, they are more likely to access treatment quickly; then disability can be prevented. Unfortunately, the reality is that lack of awareness means many people, including children, are often diagnosed with the disease in its later stages when leprosy has already caused disability.

Solution sought: an innovative and interactive game, which can be delivered in low-resource classroom settings or activity sessions to educate groups about leprosy, which addresses the importance of recognising symptoms and getting early treatment for the disease. The game needs to be easy to facilitate and intuitive to understand, such that a 5-year-old could easily participate in and enjoy it. It also needs to appeal to a broad market, being able to educate both young people and adults about how to prevent the disease and get treatment. It could also potentially raise awareness about other Neglected Tropical Diseases, so participants should not feel limited by the education of leprosy alone. The two major criteria for this game are for it to be: 1) fun and 2) educational.

The winner will be given a 6 month internship with TLME&W.

About Leprosy

Leprosy is a mildly-infectious disease caused by a bacillus called *Mycobacterium leprae* – a relative of the TB bacillus. It is more common in communities where there is overcrowding, dirty water, poor nutrition and poor standards of living; where people's immune systems are not strong and they are unable to fight the disease. Leprosy starts by damaging the small nerves on the skin's surface resulting in a loss of sensation. Without the gift of pain, everyday activities are fraught with danger. Unnoticed burns and ulcers can lead to permanent disability. Due to the inability to detect grit in the eye, blindness is a common consequence of leprosy. 95% of people have natural immunity to leprosy but for those who

don't, it is easily curable with Multi-Drug Therapy, a course of antibiotics that need to be taken for 6- 12 months

World Health Organisation figures reveal there are more than 200,000 new cases of leprosy diagnosed globally each year, and more than three million people living with irreversible disabilities, including blindness, as a result of the late treatment of leprosy.

Widely believed to be the world's oldest disease, leprosy is also one of the world's most stigmatised. A concerted effort is required to educate, encourage and empower people to stand up for their human rights. Age-old stigma surrounding leprosy sees entire families robbed of their job opportunities, education, marriage prospects and their dreams shattered.

Fear and misunderstandings surrounding leprosy, such as the disease being a curse for some alleged misdeed, are widespread. In turn they fuel a vicious circle that begins with those affected hiding the first suspect skin patches in order to avoid being shunned by their families and becoming a social outcast.

Background of The Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is an international development organisation. Our vision is simple '**Leprosy defeated and lives transformed**'. We want to end the disease and its disabling consequences, as well as supporting those affected to achieve fullness of life.

The organisation was born over 140 years ago when the young Irishman, Wellesley Bailey's, spirit of adventure led him to India in 1869. Here, for the first time he saw the devastating effects of leprosy.

In 1873, Wellesley and his wife Alice (his childhood girlfriend he married in Bombay Cathedral in 1870) returned to Ireland. They were both burdened with the suffering of the leprosy-affected people they saw in India who were severely disabled, rejected and living without any support. They began telling people about the needs of the leprosy patients they had met and with their first donations the organisation was born in 1874.

By the time Wellesley retired in 1917, the Mission was running 87 programmes in 12 countries funded by support offices in eight countries.

Today The Leprosy Mission works in 32 countries throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Recognising that leprosy is a disease of poverty, as well as providing healthcare we offer rehabilitation, education, vocational training, small business development support, housing, fresh water supplies and sanitation to tens of thousands of people affected by leprosy and disability each year. We provide a springboard to restored health, self-sufficiency and renewed hope. Our services are provided regardless of religion or ethnicity, promoting equality and social justice.