COLLECTORS' CORNER

Paediatric philately

Manouri P Senanayake

Stamps have long been recognised as paper ambassadors. They have been used for propaganda purposes, promoting campaigns of the World Health Organisation¹ and other medical topics.²⁻⁴ Paediatric philately is the study of postage stamps that represent themes related to paediatrics.⁵ The definition will not be stretched to include all stamps displaying children, but be confined to those relevant to paediatrics.

I decided to determine the scope of paediatric philately and searched for stamps through collectors, catalogues, and philatelic bureaux.⁶ I was particularly interested in which areas of child health have received most attention on stamps world wide.

I discovered that a wide range of situations relevant to paediatrics have received representation on stamps. Some examples of paediatric philately are a mother receiving a newborn baby from a nurse (Hungary 1954), breast feeding (Sri Lanka 1982, 1985, Mauritius 1988), the mother and child theme (Malawi 1964), children being fed (Algiers

Table 1 Inclusion criteria for paediatric philately

The text or illustration of a stamp should contain one or more of the following:

1. Mother-child theme or parenting
2. The developmental progress of a child from birth to adulthood: mental/physical/social
3. Primary health care strategies: growth monitoring/immunisation/oral rehydration therapy/family planning
4. Disease of children
5. Children undergoing medical examinations, investigations, and treatment
6. Health education relevant to child care
7. Children with special needs
8. Children's hospitals and care givers
9. Paediatrics
10. Paediatricians

Department of
Paediatrics, University
of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Correspondence to:
Dr M P Senanayake,
Department of Paediatrics,
Faculty of Medicine, Kynsey
Road, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka.

Figure 1 Stamps showing growth monitoring, immunisation, radiography, ultrasonography, paediatric nursing, and health education.

1944, Poland 1961, Sri Lanka 1979), being weighed (Nauru 1983, Sri Lanka 1985), being read to (Republic of Guinea 1964), in classroom situations (UN 1964, Middle Congo 1964, New Zealand 1974), at play (Thailand 1991) and participating in school games, sporting events, and scouting (Sri Lanka 1961, 1966, 1979, 1984, 1988).

Children have been shown being examined by doctors (USA 1947, Philippines 1953, Rwanda 1963, Central Africa 1988), being injected (Poland 1961, Portugal 1962), transfused (Argentina 1958, Thailand 1983, Macau 1988), immunised (Ivory Coast 1964, Nigeria 1978, Sri Lanka 1985, Argentina 1988), receiving phototherapy (India 1958), and being investigated radiographically (Belgium 1956, Zambia 1964) and ultrasonographically (UK).

Diseases of children featured on stamps are poliomyelitis (Argentina 1956, USA 1957, France 1959), leprosy (Switzerland 1976), malaria (Sri Lanka 1962), tuberculosis (France 1982, Sri Lanka 1992), blindness (Belgium 1962, Portugal 1976), deafness (Belgium 1962, UK 1981), and physical disabilities (New Zealand 1975, Australia 1981).

Children's hospitals (Luxemburg 1957), paediatric congresses (India 1977, Portugal 1962), and paediatricians themselves (Fredrick Truby King: New Zealand 1957, Janusz Korczak: Israel 1962, and Virginia Apgar: USA) have been honoured on stamps.

Some representative examples of this vast array of stamps are shown in figs 1 and 2.

Figure 2 Stamps showing breast feeding, deafness, blindness, physical handicap, children's hospitals, and paediatricians.

The criteria that a stamp should fulfil for inclusion in paediatric philately are listed in table 1.⁷

Discussion

Philately as a hobby, although in relative decline in the West, is in expansion in many parts of the world. This thematic collection shows the variety of messages relevant to paediatrics that have been highlighted on stamps and demonstrates the wide scope of paediatric philately. These stamps record milestones reached in paediatrics. They also reflect policy, recognition, and emphasis given to the different areas of child health in the respective countries of issue while providing health education.

Stamps as a promotional tool for paediatrics and child health is particularly useful in developing countries. To enhance the impact on public education stamps of denominations in common usage should be utilised for paediatric philately.

The motivation behind each of these stamps is the advancement of child health. Therefore paediatric philately should be encouraged as a means of public education and a focus of attention on child health.

- 1 Kamper-Jorgensen F. Postage stamps with WHO messages. *World Health Forum* 1992;13:20-2.
- 2 Shafir E. Infectious diseases in philately. *Isr J Med Sci* 1994;30:502.
- 3 Haddy RI. The Munchausen of Munchausen syndrome. *Arch Fam Med* 1993;2:141-2.
- 4 Shafir E. Waldema Mordechai Wolf Haffkine—vaccine developer. *Isr J Med Sci* 1994;30: 249.
- 5 Arkless HA. Paediatric philately 1964. *Clin Pediatr (Phila)* 1965;4:247-51.
- 6 Gibbons S. *Stamps of the world*. (Issued annually.)
- 7 Kamper-Jorgensen F. *WHO on stamps*. Booklet issued to mark 40th anniversary of the World Health Organisation. Geneva: WHO, 1988.