

with palsied and ulcerated limbs made poor farmers. Every kind of vice flourished, and suicide was common. The few physicians who came there were terrified of the residents or took advantage of them as captive subjects for bizarre and repulsive human experimentation. The terminally ill were literally dumped into a shack to die. That any residents at all survived is a tribute to their stoical cooperation with one another in the face of official indifference.

As rumors of the horrors of Molokai leaked out, infected persons who were still at large became fugitives, pursued by bounty hunters into the fastnesses of the islands. Others with noninfectious skin conditions, such as psoriasis, were exiled by error. One unlucky man was misdiagnosed with leprosy after a wild boar bit off his toe.

In later years, conditions on the peninsula slowly improved, especially as the business leaders of the islands began to understand that the relentless bad publicity was detrimental to trade and tourism. Several remarkable people worked tirelessly to benefit the Molokai colony, including saintly, pugnacious Father Damien; Joseph Dutton, a hero of the Civil War and an alcoholic on a quest for redemption; and Mother Marianne, who had to fend off unwanted romantic advances from the prime minister.

Tayman simplifies to some extent the complex public health issues involved in the management of the Molokai colony and gives the impression that the policy pursued there was senseless and arbitrary. However, although the operation of Molokai was cruel and feckless, the theory behind the colony was in accordance with the best medical opinion of the day. For example, William Osler wrote approvingly of the segregation policy as enforced at the leprosarium at Tracadie, NB, Canada. Even some modern medical historians argue that ruthless isolation in leprosaria was the primary factor that brought leprosy under control in Europe, centuries before the development of antibiotics. Furthermore, there is evidence that most cases of leprosy in the Hawaiian epidemic were of the highly contagious lepromatous form (patients shed *Mycobacterium leprae* from their heavily infiltrated nasal passages).

The Colony begins as a tale of heartbreak, suffering, and terrible loneliness, but it ends as a testimony of triumph and survival, with Tayman writing of the poignant and successful efforts of



The Kalaupapa Peninsula, Molokai.

AP Photo/Eric Risberg.

the survivors of Molokai to overcome prejudice and disability and rejoin society. The book is a painstakingly researched social history, a morality play illuminating the best and worst of human nature, a page-turning narrative, and a deeply sympathetic drama featuring a fascinating cast of characters.

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CORRECTIONS

The Silent Epidemic — The Health Effects of Illiteracy (July 27, 2006;355:339-41). In the third column of page 340, the second sentence of the second full paragraph should have read, "In one study, more than two thirds of patients with low literacy in one public hospital said they had never told their spouses about it," not "in public hospitals," as printed.

Clopidogrel for the Prevention of Atherothrombotic Events (July 27, 2006;355:418-21). On page 420, the second line of the reply letter by Topol should have read, "there was a benefit of dual antiplatelet therapy with respect to the reduction in the rate of nonfatal stroke (1.9 percent in the group given aspirin and clopidogrel vs. 2.4 percent in the group given aspirin and placebo, $P=0.03$)," not "(2.4 percent in the group given aspirin and clopidogrel vs. 1.9 percent in the group given aspirin and placebo, $P=0.03$)," as printed.

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