SUMMARY

The Rovisco Pais archives include a variety of logbooks documenting patient records of Hospital-Colonia Rovisco Pais.

The logbooks, covering periods between 1960 and 1997, include records on the admission, readmission, and discharge of patients; leave permits; medical examinations (both of Rovisco Pais residents and of outpatients); deaths; and correspondence with other health institutions around Portugal. The archives also include a newsletter produced by patients (1956-1957), a medical journal produced by the institution (1962-1974), and a collection of press cuttings about the institution (1947-2002).

Over 3500 Social Service files, held at the Social Service office, include further detail on individual patients. These include details about patients’ origin, their family background, living conditions, and financial situation. They also include detailed clinical files and requests for visitation and leave.

The administrative archive holds additional files of patients and staff members at Rovisco Pais. These provide a detailed picture of daily life in the colony, including information such as staff and patients’ work schedules, rations, communications between patients and the hospital, care of patients’ children, and the punishments for patients who violated the hospital’s regulations.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following describes the records at Hospital-Colónia, Rovisco Pais, Tocha, Coimbra with some suggestions as to how these may be used to construct a history of the experiences of people who were treated here and the approaches towards leprosy in Portugal.


These registers record the leave of patients. The information provided consists on the number of patients who have been granted leave, the location of the patient within the hospital (pavilions, family nucleus (nucleo familiar), the town that patients were destined to visit, i.e. usually their hometown, the duration of their leave, and date at which the leave starts and ends.

Particular cases are noted in red. These refer either to extensions awarded by the hospital administration or to extensions taken by the patients without the sanction of the hospital.

This data permits the researcher to map the pattern of leave awarded throughout the years, providing insight into the geography of the leprosy in Portugal. It also shows changes in policy after new legislation was implemented, following the 1974 revolution. By correlating this information with other sources such as that provided by the log of in-patients or the record of readmissions, it reveals the difficulties encountered in being reintegrated into the
larger society on release from the hospital so that incursions into society became temporary and Rovisco Pais became a permanent home for many.


This book provides data on the patients who were readmitted to the hospital, from 1977 until 1996. The information presented here refers to the name of the patients, the county, district from which they originated, the date of readmission, as well as the name of the last discharge.

This information permits an understanding of the movement of patients between the hospital and “the outside world”; however, it is only when this information is correlated with the medical, administrative or social files of individuals that it is possible to form a better impression of the reasons for readmission. A study of this register throughout the years makes it possible to map the movement of patients, particularly the constant number of discharges and readmissions that several patients made throughout their lives. This reveals the situations that these patients found themselves in, when they were advised or compelled to return to hospital for medical reasons, or when they were granted permission to return to their homes, even if only for a period of days, months or a few years. This in turn shows the impact that leprosy had on the patients and the lives of their families.

Agentes físicos do Fôro Leprótocico, N.º 259. refers to the 1960s

This log book records the date of the examinations, the name of the patient, their place of residence (which includes a description of the place, county, or if they are presently at Rovisco Pais), the physician, the nature of the treatment and which part of the body was under scrutiny, the variety of treatments, and also compliance details.

This quantitative data indicates the examinations carried out in the hospital in the 1960s. These records may be complemented with data from the clinical files.

Consulta Externa Zona Sã, N.º 258 (External Consultation in the Sanitised Area)

This shows the date of the consultation, name of patient and parents of the patient (fathers), their age, marital status (married, single, etc), locality of their residence – the home town or village, freguesia and county, the reason for consultation (disaster, fractures, wounds, pains, infections, work accidents, are the most common causes). A more detailed description of disasters is found in the next column, followed by the medical diagnosis, the medical interventions and treatments carried out. The general observations provide information on the consultation, as well as the identity of the physician.

This provides information about the general medical problems that took patients to Rovisco Pais, as well as the general medical activities of the leprosy hospital and the physicians who were in attendance.

Livro N.8

This is similar to the records on outpatient consultations for leprosy patients, but for 1982 and 1983.

Registo de Pensos e Injectáveis (Book on Treatments and Injections) N.º 242
Information on the general practice undertaken by the Hospital Rovisco Pais for outpatients in the vicinity of the hospital.

*Registo de Óbitos Internos (Register of the Deaths of Hospitalised Patients) N.º 256 and 257. From 1987-1997*

Information on the deaths occurring in Rovisco Pais over a decade, from 1987 to 1997, including the date of death, the name of the patient, their place of origin, their cause of death (which ranged from lung problems, infections, senility, heart failure, etc) and the place of death, which was usually in Rovisco Pais or in the Hospital of the University of Coimbra.

This shows illnesses that actually killed patients. More detailed information can sometimes be found in the clinical and administrative files of the patients.

*Registo de Óbitos ocorridos no exterior. (Deaths Outside the Hospital) N.º 255, From 1973-1996.*

A record of the deaths of leprosy-affected people occurring outside the hospital between 1973 until 1996. To the name of each patient, an account of their situation with regard to Rovisco Pais is provided so that it is possible to determine whether or not they were inpatients or outpatients, treated by mobile patrol, on leave from the hospital, discharged, or even outside the country.

This level of detail allows the researcher to understand the number of patients who were on leave or who were inpatients, as well as the individuals suspected of being infected with leprosy who perished. A brief look at these records reveals that the causes of deaths are many – cirrhosis of the liver, senility, stroke, tetanus, flu, heart failure, septicaemia, acute anaemia, pneumonia, bronchopneumonia appear often.

Correlation with the other records may provide insight into the health problems afflicting Portugal, in general, and Portuguese leprosy patients, in particular. Furthermore, correlation with data in individual files would reveal the policy of the hospital towards the “last days” of the patients, with additional information about patients left the hospital or even went abroad.

*Registo de Altas Colectivas (Log book of Leave) N.º 254. From 1985 until 1987*

The broadly descriptive information present in this register shows the name of the patient, the date of their leave, and their destination.


This register provides the name of the patient, the date of their leave, their destination, plus the location of the patient within the hospital area.

*Altas confirmadas, (Log Book of Confirmed Dismissals) N.º 250. From 1969 until the 1990s.*

The name of the patient, sex, civil status, place of origin, profession, date of discharge, the form of leprosy, associated illnesses, admission and discharge record, and death is noted.
This register provides further detail about the discharge of the patients, with data referring to their social class, seen in the record of their occupation, as well the differential incidence of the different forms of leprosy.

*Oftalmologia (Log Book Ophtalmology) N.º 252*

A record of eye problems from 1958 to 1972.

*Registo de Correspondência Recebida [Log book of Correspondence Received (by the Rovisco Pais)] N.º 249. From 1973-late 1990s*

This record book provides an overview of the health network in place in the country, and how it functioned to detect leprosy. In addition, the hospitalisation of patients, follow-up examinations, as well as other procedures, such as communication between patients and hospital is recorded.

In coming correspondence was recorded with the date and the person or institution sending them. Documentation sent by patients or relatives usually included information about ambulatory treatments, request for drugs, subsidies, certificates of dismissal or extensions of leave.

This register reveals the difficulties patients encountered and the policies and bureaucracy around the disease.

Communication from other institutions includes the correspondence with the health-administrators (delegados de saúde) scattered around the country. This shows the network in place for notifying leprosy suspects. Reports of a suspect triggered action by Rovisco Pais or by the health system. Patients were redirected to other hospitals, such as the Curry Cabral in Lisbon, or mobile brigades from Rovisco Pais would go to inspect the suspect cases. A physician or a nurse would request the mobile brigades to inspect the family contacts of certain patients, or they would inform the hospital of a death, or announce that a certain patient was currently under treatment through the health services of the area. There is also correspondence from the army requiring the hospital to evaluate the one of its soldiers and their family contacts.

This data, despite only broadly recording the correspondence and the hospital's actions/reply, allows the researcher to form an impression of the medical network in place in Portugal and its response to cases of leprosy, the actions of those identified and the several institutions involved, as well as the tensions between all of these. However, correspondence from patients decreases greatly in the first years, and

by 1975, the vast majority of the entries in the log book refer to institutional correspondence dealing with issues to do with patients.

*Livro N.º 9, (library N.º 241) Consulta externa do fôro Leprológico 1983-1989*

This records suspected leprosy sufferers and patients infected with leprosy. This register records the date of consultation, the name of the individual under examination, their age, place of residence, their classification as either outpatient, discharged, or inpatient of Rovisco Pais.

Information on examinations, included skin scrapings or biopsies of the patient and contacts (people in contact with the patient, usually relatives, but that could also mean work colleagues), the results of lepromin tests, and medication is recorded.

This allows insight into the changing approaches to examination and therapeutics. From the 1991 onwards the information regarding medication is absent and is replaced by general information on initial and follow up consultations.

**Externos Libertados (External Patients), N.º 246. From 1960-1968**

Apart from the name, age, civil status of the patient, their profession, and place of residence, there is information on the date of discharge of the patients who were not hospitalised, and were thus under ambulatory surveillance by the institution, with details of the form of leprosy that affected them.

**Log Book Altas Definitivas (Permanent Dismissals) N.º 243. From 1960-1983**

The information on the patients receiving permanent discharge from Rovisco Pais from 1960 up to 1983 can be found here. Again a broad and quantified record of the number of patients, their age, civil status, profession, place of residence, date of permanent discharge and the clinical form of leprosy is recorded.

**LUZ Jornal dos Internados (Patients’ Newspaper) Nº. 240 (Secondary Source)**

The eleven issues of the journal of the patients hospitalised in Rovisco Pais, from 1956 until 1957, with articles written by them can be located here. The articles range from poetry, articles on visits to Rovisco Pais by doctors of politicians, religious pieces, articles by the hospital doctors, and even patients’ views on policies and events within and outside the hospital. These publications provide more insight into the perspectives of the patients on several matters. The main editor and contributor of the newspaper, the patient, Sr. Abel, is still alive and still lives in the Rovisco Pais.

**Journal Rovisco Pais (Secondary Source)**

This medical journal made approximately fifty issues from 1962 until its demise in 1974. The majority of articles refer to medical/clinical matters related to leprosy, with emphasis on articles by the health staff of the hospital and research conducted there.

These are most important for a broad understanding of hospitalisation, medical examinations, number of children under the care of the hospital, and the mobile campaigns.

**Livro Recortes Imprensa 1947-2002 (Book of the Press Cuttings) N.º238 (Secondary Source)**
General Press articles on Rovisco Pais from its inauguration in 1947 up to 2002. This book provides a most interesting view of press publications from the New State period with its laudatory views. It is also possible to find extracts on runaway patients, as well as articles from 2000 on the last patients who opted to spend their final years in the hospital.

Social Service files

These are the best organised and best kept files. There are approximately 3500 individual files. Currently these are located at the Social Service office. These files are organised by counties and districts. There is also some information about patients arriving from overseas territories such as Madeira and Azores, as well as the few from the ex-colonies – Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique.

Each file presents an introduction to the social and cultural context from which the leprosy patients originated. This is presented in the overview written by the social service of the hospital and includes a report on the economic status of the patient, a description of their family, his/her occupation or that of their parents, and an estimate of the possible income, the living conditions (house, work, clothing) and the recommendations and actions carried out by the Rovisco Pais social service, for instance, if the provision of financial aid was necessary. This was initially proposed by the social service and then decided by the hospital administration.

D/I => Doente internado (patient that was hospitalised)
D/E=> Doente externo (external patient, might have been previously hospitalised, but then was released)

This archive also allows a broad understanding of the tensions and negotiations between patients and the social services of the hospital regarding compulsory hospitalisation (until the mid-1970s). Some cases illustrate the difficulties that the social service/ Rovisco Pais had in hospitalising patients who had been evading the authorities for considerable time.

Having said this, the old clinical files, roughly around 1500 files, are much richer. These allow the researcher an in-depth view of the use of drugs, as well as their “evolution” through the years and particular therapeutics for specific stages of the disease. In addition to the medical files mentioned previously, these files also present information on the personal, familial and social context of the patients, and thus of the population strata and the regions most affected by the disease.

As expected, the bulk of these files focus on examinations and treatment carried out on patients and comunicates (usually relatives and co-workers). Each patient presents a file denominated ficha de elucidação e diagnóstico (file of elucidation and diagnosis). This was the first file an individual had in the hospital. Family contacts were also examined and the results noted down. If they were infected, a new file was created.

The treatment determined by the physicians was also recorded in the file of the patient. But the battery of files focusing on medical matters does not stop here. The clinical history of the patient can also be found in these files, as well as the ficha terapêutica (therapeutic file), which provides information on the form of leprosy, the drugs/treatments used, and the notes of the nurse and the physician. Other medical files can also be found in this old archive, for instance the ficha epidemiologica e clínica (epidemiological and clinical file) offer not only information on the patients, but also on their living conditions. Several other files can also be
found, such as the *ficha dactiloscópia* with the patients’ fingerprints and files on the eye examinations.

These files also contain requests for visits by relatives and also requests for leave. These were often from the local priest or the president of the *junta de freguesia* (local council), asking the hospital administration to permit the visit of a relative or to permit a patient to visit their residence. Going home was problematic for the patient as he was only allowed to do so once he had received the sanction of the administrative service and presented three negative bacillary examinations and finally received permission from the director of the hospital. After compliance with these conditions, the social service would supply the patient with funds to return to his home. The decision by the administration of the hospital depended heavily on the assessment of the condition of the patient and their family by the social staff.

Through the social service records and the clinical files, a good picture of the daily life of the patients can be constructed, as well as the geography of leprosy in Portugal, including a social geography of the disease and changing treatments across the years. These files also allow a glimpse of the organisation of the state leprosy services in the territory and the roles of the local politicians and priests in aiding patients.

**Administrative Records**

The administrative archive of Rovisco Pais, which holds files of every patient admitted to the institution, or any staff member, health worker or not, who worked at one time or another for the institution, is a rich source for a researcher.

Usually the file of each patient starts with the birth certificate. This is followed by the admission file. By 1951, 847 individuals had been hospitalised. Also present in the administrative file was the *Declaração de Pobreza* (declaration of poverty), usually provided by the Junta de Freguesia (the local council). This enabled the patient to receive financial support from the Social Service of Rovisco Pais. All the communications between the patient and the hospital are present in this file. For instance, requests for extension of leave by the patient or their relatives, requests for drugs, financial support for the patient or their family, aid for the patients’ children, either in the form of clothing, shoes, books, etc, is recorded. This information shows the problems faced by the patient and the difficulties that many families found themselves in, especially when several members of a family and sometimes the bread-winners were compulsorily hospitalised.

In these documents, it is not uncommon to find in the files the evaluation by the social services and within this an internal 'debate' on the matters at hand. The role of the health services is recorded across the years. Their activities included supporting the patient and the families, advising about the future of the children, particularly with respect to studies or work, attempting to find relatives to take care of children, and setting a monthly allowance for the children and their tutors. These records are indispensable for understanding the level of disruption that entire families underwent throughout the year and how Rovisco Pais attempted to mitigate this.

The *Notas de Serviço Interno* (Notes of the Internal Service) are also present in almost every file, of both patients and staff, and these permit a reconstruction of the daily lives of the patients within the colony.
This document provides information on the hospital staff in the Série A, (series). Série B (series) was for patients.

The first series records the doctors and nurses in the service. It records the nurses and physicians, as well as other workers, such as ex-patients who were employed to look after livestock or agriculture, names, salaries (usually much lower than elsewhere), and work schedules. There is a small description of the tasks of physicians and nurses, their allocation to the different pavilions, the escala de serviço (the schedule) of their service/routine. These documents permit a better grasp of the organisation of the hospital service and the tasks carried out by patients; for instance, their role in heading a knitting or primary teaching course (there was an adult school which at one time had almost 100 students). (This indicates the ethos of the administration in organising and motivating patients to have an occupation that could be of some use when they left the hospital).

The Série B provides details about diets (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and modifications for special cases, for instance, those working in the fields (men), or with the livestock, or carrying out more demanding physical work. Evidence of the work carried out by women can also be found in this section of this document. They usually worked within the hospital, either taking care of clothes, cleaning, or as health auxiliaries, etc.

Important information can also be gleaned from hospital decisions on the punishment of patients. These punishments ranged from refusal to allow patients to leave the hospital to visit relatives to imprisonment. A prison was located in the grounds of the colony. Imprisonment took place according to the deliberation of the administration. By contrasting this information with patient files, it is possible to understand daily life and the level of control/imposition, and the tensions emerging from the clash between patients, hospital management rules, the health staff, other patients, and non-compliance with the leave regulations. One common punishment related to the movement of patients within the hospital ground. The plan of the hospital ensured a division of the sexes. The main road from the entrance to the administration building physically draws a line between the sexes: men and women were not to mingle, and even talking was restricted between them, so was not uncommon for patients to have inquiries instituted by the administration following complaints by the guards or other staff when longer conversations or other violations of this rule were alleged.

Visit to relatives or other matters outside the hospital could only take place after a written request was presented to the hospital administration. The latter would examine the reports of medical examinations and behaviour, then the patient was allowed a maximum of 15 to 30 days. On departure and return, the patient reported to the colony reception, and these dates were reported by internal communication to the administration. However, often the patient did not keep to the time permitted and an investigation would followed, which may lead to punishment, depending on the reasons given for the delay, which in some cases extended to 90 days.

As hinted previously according to the patients’ excuses, sanctions by the hospital could extend to withholding future permits to leave. In the cases where patients absconded from the hospital, an action that was not so infrequent, the administration contacted the patient demanding his/her return and then contacted the health services of the local area in order to persuade the patient to return or have the police visit their home or that of their relatives, in order to bring them in. This was perceived as a serious breach of the hospital regulations and imprisonment usually followed. Only when political changes occurred in 1974, with the
consequent change of the hospital regulations, did this strict regime of compulsory hospitalisation and confinement change. Rules were relaxed and the exit/visit rules increasingly relaxed up until the 1980s.

By the 1960/70 leave to visit relatives took place in the following way: the patient got in contact with the Social Service; the physician of the pavilion would give his opinion; the administrative service would then report on the punishments that the patient might have incurred; the request for leave would then go to the administration. This was then communicated via internal communication to the different services of the hospital such as kitchen and reception. Before the patient left, all the belongings he/she carried were to be sterilised. An inventory of the patient's clothes, as well as shoes, was carried out when they left and when they returned. (Work clothes and shoes and even coats for the physicians and uniforms for the guards were made by the residents.)

The administrative files not only show the patients. Much of the information in the files refers to the staff, their qualifications, their work within the hospital, holidays, salaries, days absent, and other administrative aspects such as the rank of the physician and their service in the hospital, plus some information on the papers produced by the physicians. The files checked did not show much about possible tensions existing amongst staff, but one file revealed information about a nurse illegally selling goods to the patients. A closer study of all the administrative files, literally thousands, might provide more on the complexity of daily life and the intricate web of relations between patients and staff, amongst staff themselves and between medical staff and the administration.

The administrative archive may serve as a departure point for a portrayal of the Hospital Rovisco Pais. A study of the livelihood of the patients, their families, the relations with the health staff and the administration in combination with other archival sources present at the Hospital Rovisco Pais, such as the clinical, social services archives, the publications in the Hospital journal, the legal changes regarding the patients status, and the hospitals regulations, make it is possible to construct a most interesting portrayal of the history of leprosy in twentieth century Portugal.