



BRINGING CIVIL SOCIETY TOGETHER
TO END THE TUBERCULOSIS EPIDEMIC

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Research and Development on Tuberculosis Drug Development

TBEC Webinar series

Wednesday, 7th October 2020, 15:00-16:30 CET

Background

A major issue in achieving the tuberculosis (TB) targets in the SDGs is the growing resistance to available drugs, which means the disease is becoming harder to treat with lower treatment success rates. Drugs resistant TB is a growing concern, last year alone there were more than half a million cases of drug resistant TB.

Drug resistant TB develops when a long, complex, decades-old TB drug regimen is improperly administered, or when people with TB stop taking their medicines before the disease is fully eradicated from the body. Multidrug resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) are difficult to cure. Even when long, burdensome treatment regimens are completed, they still have high mortality rates. Additionally, once a drug-resistant strain has developed, it can be transmitted to those with drug-susceptible TB leading to co-infection with multiple strains of TB.

Today's TB treatments are long, complicated to administer, and can be toxic. Treatment regimes can range from 6 months to 2 years or even longer, and many people have negative interactions between commonly used antiretrovirals and TB treatment. Treatment for drug-resistant TB can take even longer, and can be much more complex, expensive, and potentially toxic meaning that many patients are unable to access treatment. Furthermore, the cost of curing MDR-TB can be staggering, literally thousands of times as expensive as that of regular treatment in some regions, posing a significant challenge to governments, health systems, and other actors.

Appropriate treatment of drug-resistant TB with all-oral treatment regimes needs to be made available to all who need it, in line with WHO's quest to achieve universal health coverage, and to avert deaths from a preventable, treatable and curable disease like TB. This is vital to achieve the targets of the Political Declaration of the UN high-level meeting and the WHO End TB Strategy. The recent [regulatory approval for new treatment regimen](#) has the potential to reduce the length, cost, and side effects of treatment for some of the most severe forms of TB.

While progress has been made on developing new treatment regimes, much of this progress has been put on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The capacity of national healthcare systems is being stretched, and resources are being diverted from other diseases such as TB in order to tackle COVID-19. Many TB patients have also faced additional barriers to accessing prevention and treatment as social distancing measures and lockdowns have further reduced the accessibility of healthcare services.



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As the world continues to tackle the global pandemic, it is important to ensure that patients continue to have access to safe and high-quality TB treatment and care, and the research and development into new drug developments is able to continue. Considering the similarity in symptoms and transmission of TB and COVID-19, as well as synergies in the response (e.g. prevention, infection control, adherence support, etc), the pandemic presents many questions for TB field and opportunities for learning through research and innovation, and the adoption of best practices.

Join TB Europe Coalition for the 3rd in our series of webinars on the impact of COVID-19 on TB R&D. In this session we will be joined by TB Alliance and the Moldova National Association of TB (SMIT) to focus on the impact of COVID-19 on TB treatment and drug development.

The line-up for speakers and registration is below. Please register to receive zoom link.

Registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DwpCZI2DT0Wh42YLggR0cw

Agenda

- ❖ Introduction (Paul Sommerfeld, Chair, TBEC)
- ❖ Impact of COVID-19 on TB Drug Development (Willo Brock, TB Alliance)
- ❖ Gaps in Drug Resistant TB Care and Recommendations to Address Challenges Faced by Affected Communities and Individuals (Oxana Rucsineanu, SMIT)
- ❖ Questions and Answers