An exploratory study on Stigma associated with Tuberculosis in a Zambian Adult population

INTRODUCTION

Various studies have demonstrated that stigma related to TB keeps people away from seeking care.

- Studies suggest that TB patients experience double stigma with TB being considered as a disease of the poor and that all TB patients are HIV positive.
- Victims of stigma are those perceived to possess characteristics different from the rest of the population.

METHODOLOGY

- The study was carried out at three health facilities from three districts in North Western Province in Zambia.
- The three districts (Solwezi, Mwinilunga and Kabompo) had been selected for their high TB/HIV disease burden in the province.
- Participants in the study included adult TB patients on treatment for a minimum of 3 weeks, as well as health care workers and community members.
- After obtaining informed consent, a survey questionnaire was administered to 111 TB patients.
- The survey was translated into local languages and piloted before use.
- Data was also obtained from Health care workers and community members through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.
- Smaller groups of TB patients also participated in focus group discussions.
- The data was subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

RESULTS

- Excluded from school and services
  - Yes
  - No
  - No answer
  - Total
  - Ever been discriminate against because of TB
  - No
  - Yes
  - Total

- In spite of the unwavering global resolve to rinse the world of the TB scourge, TB-related stigma continues to be a major obstacle in realizing this commitment.
- In this era of HIV and AIDS, stigma seems to be gaining roots alongside TB/HIV prevention messages.
- This study found the association of HIV with TB to be one of the major causes of stigma.
- Some participants revealed they were being stigmatized and discriminated against on the suspicion that they were HIV positive. This finding strengthens arguments of researchers who have stated that HIV/AIDS is fundamentally the source TB-related stigma.
- The link between HIV and TB as a source of TB stigma has implications for TB control programmes.

CONCLUSION

- Stigma was prevalent in the study.
- Participants perceived being stigmatized and discriminated against.
- Increasing awareness in patients and sensitization of the community were identified as a way of reducing stigma.

Selected references:
- Mulenga C, Tandon R, Tchilimba H et al. Social stigma in Zambia: living with the double burden of Tuberculosis and HIV.

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