

Need to Take Urgent Actions to Contain Tuberculosis: United Nations

Dear Editor,

Tuberculosis (TB) has been ranked as one among the top 10 reasons for mortality across the globe. In fact, in the last year, close to 10 million individuals was diagnosed of the disease while 1.6 million lost their lives due to the disease-related complications. Further, the disease remains the most common cause of death among people infected with the human immunodeficiency virus.^[1] In addition, to complicate the matter even more, the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB has become another serious challenge for the policymakers and the health sector.^[1,2] According to the end TB strategy, the target is to minimize TB-related deaths by 90%, reduce incidence by 80%, and eliminate catastrophic expenditures.^[1]

Even though an annual reduction of 2% in the incidence of the disease is being reported, nevertheless, to meet the set targets, the reduction has to be at least 5% globally each year.^[3] In order to end the epidemic, there is an immense need to offer integrated patient-centered care and prevention measures, formulation of strong, and bold policies along with a supportive mechanism and augment investment in the research- and disease-related innovations.^[1,2] However, the success of the above-mentioned measures will directly depend on the ability of each of the nations to adhere to the basic principles.^[1] These include political commitment and accountability, strengthening of monitoring and evaluation activities, involvement of community and other concerned sectors, protection of human rights, promotion of ethics and equality, and implementation of customized strategies at the national level with the help of international welfare agencies.^[1-3]

In addition, nations should formulate evidence-based policies and interventions for the prevention and control of the disease.^[2,3] Moreover, there is an immense need to promote research in the field, especially with regard to launching new drugs and tackling the problem of drug resistance.^[1,3] In order to respond to the existing problems, the members of the United Nations have expressed their commitment to ensure that 40 million and 30 million people will receive the desired care and prophylactic treatment respectively by 2022.^[3] In addition, it has been decided that the nations will

together mobilize US\$ 15 billion on an annual basis for the implementation of prevention and care and research-related activities.^[3]

Further, the nations have agreed to take strict measures to contain drug-resistant TB and increase the advocacy and social communication-related activities to minimize the stigma attributed to the disease.^[1,2] Overall, the nations have set the roadmap to expedite measures to attain the set targets.^[3] If we all work together and in a systematic manner, there is a definite opportunity to save the lives of millions of people, improve the quality of life of many and simultaneously reduce the burden on the health-care delivery system as well as on the governments.^[1-3]

In conclusion, owing to the fact that TB remains the most common life-threatening infectious disease and that the current progress is not up to the mark, it is high time that national leaders together prepare a plan, take bold decisions, and help each other in the battle against the deadly disease.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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