

Contribution of TB-HIV Section at NTI

The TB/HIV section at National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI), Bangalore was established about a decade ago. Since its inception, the section has been involved in training activities and operational research. Though stand alone TB/HIV trainings are a rarity in the present context, several medical and paramedical trainees in the recent past have been trained in the challenges and management of TB/HIV co-infection. The section has lent its mite for two operational research studies conducted by the institute - *TB/HIV collaborative activities at the district level* and *District level intervention on routine referral of TB patients to ICTC*. The section in-charge was the co-investigator in conducting the later study, the details of which have been provided by the principal investigator. The salient features of the study *TB/HIV collaborative activities at the district level* is outlined below. The study was conducted in close co-ordination with Karnataka AIDS Prevention Society.

TB/HIV collaborative activities at the district level

Genesis of the study

A pilot study to strengthen TB-HIV collaborative activities in Mandya district, Karnataka, was undertaken by NTI in collaboration with WHO-SEARO in 2004-05. It was for the first time that an effort was made to provide inputs to strengthen TB/HIV collaborative activities at the district level. To begin with, a situational analysis to identify the achievements and shortfalls of the RNTCP and NACP in Mandya district was undertaken in order to institute meaningful collaboration between the TB and AIDS control programmes. It was observed that TB/HIV collaborative activities in the district were barely palpable and were in the nascent stage. The observations made during the situational analysis were conveyed to state and district level officials for remedial actions and an action plan for the study was thence drafted.

Activities undertaken

Some of the broad activities outlined in the action plan were:

- To constitute a district level TB-HIV Co-ordination Committee at Mandya with representation of personnel from the TB and HIV/AIDS control programmes.
- To ensure service delivery co-ordination and streamlining of the VCTC-RNTCP cross referrals in the district
- To conduct a study on the HIV sero-prevalence among new smear positive TB patients of Mandya District. It was for the first time that an attempt was made to obtain data on the co-infection at the level of a district. The study was carried out in a representative sample of 152 new smear positive pulmonary TB patients (116 males and 36 females the median age being 42 years). The estimated prevalence of HIV sero-prevalence amongst the new smear positive tuberculosis patients was 4.6% (95% CI: 4.16 – 5.04).

Conclusions

The experience from this project indicates that minimal financial inputs are required for the implementation of the TB-HIV collaborative activities undertaken by the project provided the individual TB and AIDS control programmes are strengthened, the available resources (human, laboratory and financial) of the two programmes adequately mobilized and the collaborative activities periodically supervised by the TB-HIV co-ordination committees both at the district and state levels. Many of the activities carried out in the study were subsequently a part of the National framework for TB/HIV collaborative activities.

Presentations pertaining to the study were made during NATCON conferences in 2006 and 2008 and a paper titled *Study of HIV seroprevalance among new smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis patients in a predominantly rural district in Southern India* was published in SAARC Journal of Tuberculosis, Lung diseases and HIV/AIDS, Vol III, No1, 2006.