

Practical Approach to Lung Health (PAL)

A primary health care strategy
for the integrated management of respiratory
conditions in people
five years of age and over

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1. Introduction

The objectives of the DOTS strategy to control tuberculosis (TB), as adopted by the World Health Assembly and endorsed by the Stop TB Partnership, are to cure at least 85% of the sputum smear-positive TB cases put on anti-TB treatment and to detect at least 70% of the estimated new sputum smear-positive TB cases worldwide. These objectives are a prerequisite to halve TB prevalence and deaths from TB in order to halt and begin to reverse the incidence of TB by 2015, as formulated in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Since the inception of the DOTS strategy, the cure rate among TB patients put on treatment has increased significantly in many countries. In 2002, this rate reached 82% in those areas where DOTS had been implemented. However, the global average detection rate remains well below the established target of 70%; indeed, in 2003 only 45% of all estimated smear-positive TB cases were identified under DOTS conditions.

In the light of this, the World Health Organization (WHO) is currently considering a variety of strategies to improve TB case detection – while maintaining the gains achieved in treatment outcomes – through the development and implementation of a multifaceted approach. This approach includes:

- Global DOTS Expansion, which aims to accelerate DOTS coverage for populations living in areas where DOTS has not been yet implemented, with a particular focus on the 22 countries where the burden of TB is high;
- the Public-Private Mix approach, which aims to link all health-care providers – public and private – to national TB control programmes (NTPs). The purpose is to extend quality TB care to all patients managed outside national NTPs;
- the Interim Policy on Collaborative TB/HIV Activities, which aims to develop collaboration between TB control and HIV/AIDS programmes in order to improve the prevention, identification and management of TB among people living with HIV/AIDS as well as the prevention, identification and management

of HIV among TB patients, particularly in country settings where the burden of HIV is high;

- the Community-Based DOTS approach, which aims to involve communities in TB control activities, with a particular focus on those regions where access to health-care services is poor; it also focuses on improving quality of care for TB patients within their communities;
- the Practical Approach to Lung Health (PAL), which aims to improve TB diagnosis and care by improving: (i) the quality of respiratory care in primary health care (PHC) settings, and (ii) the efficiency of respiratory service delivery within health systems.

2. Burden of respiratory illnesses

Respiratory diseases are responsible for a considerable burden of suffering and death in all age groups worldwide. Although respiratory diseases have always been an important cause of morbidity and mortality, in recent decades, their incidence has steadily increased everywhere. This rise can be attributed to a rapid increase in a number of risk factors such as tobacco smoking habits in developing countries, the HIV epidemic, urbanization, industrialization, atmospheric pollution, and the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions in certain countries.

In 2002, respiratory conditions were responsible for more than 11 million deaths worldwide; this translates as a specific mortality rate equal to 183 per 100 000

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