

New tools are desperately needed in the fight against TB

This World TB Day, TB Europe Coalition is calling for world leaders to step up and support research and development into desperately needed new tools to fight tuberculosis amidst devastating predictions of the future impact of the epidemic.

New data prepared by KPMG highlights both the future human cost and economic impact of drug resistant TB to the world. In Europe alone, drug resistant TB is estimated to result in an astounding additional 2.1 million deaths in Europe by 2050, at an economic cost of US\$1.1 trillion.

TB is the world's leading cause of death from any infectious disease. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 10.4 million people fell ill with TB in 2015, and 1.8 million people died from the disease. Tuberculosis and drug resistant form of the disease are particularly a burden for low- and middle-income countries. However, this new data shows that these countries are not unique in being affected by TB, with responsibility falling on every country to act to end the disease.

TB bacteria have certain attributes which make them more likely to develop resistance to antibiotics.

Treatment can take up to two years, 14,000 pills and include eight months of painful injections. The strong but sometimes ineffective drugs are toxic, so treatment has the risk of adverse effects such as deafness, blindness and psychosis. This, coupled with the length of treatment means people often have difficulty finishing the full course of antibiotics, leading to the development of further resistance. However, investment into research and development for much needed new tools to end TB is woefully inadequate, decreasing by over a third since 2011 to only 33.7% of the \$2billion annual funding target outlined in the 2011-2015 WHO Global Plan.

“At the current trajectory, we face a world in which totally drug resistant strains of the disease to which we have no treatment is a very realistic prospect. Without new and better treatments, preventing the further spread of MDRTB, let alone eliminating the disease, will be practically impossible.” said Rachael Crockett, TB Policy Officer RESULTS UK and TB Europe Coalition.

This year, the global TB community are focusing their advocacy towards the G20, who between them, account for 92 per cent of global R&D expenditure and 54 per cent of all TB cases every year. The German G20 presidency has put tackling drug resistant infections high on the political agenda.

“A third of all deaths from antimicrobial resistance are caused by TB. With no new drugs entering the standard TB treatment in over 50 years, it is clear that there is a market failure in the development of new TB tools. If G20 leaders are serious about tackling AMR, we must address tuberculosis, or pay the future costs” said Jonathan Stillo, Medical Anthropologist Wayne State University

In a [recent statement from the World Health Organisation, Dr Margaret Chan, Director General, WHO](#), said: “Addressing drug-resistant TB research is a top priority for the WHO and the world.”. TB Europe Coalition calls on the global community to put their words into action and act quickly to incentivise the development of drugs, diagnostics and vaccines for TB. This year, the German G20 presidency provides the opportunity for truly global action, to make possible the development of new tools that could help save millions of lives for generations to come.

Editors Notes:

- Tuberculosis retains the unwelcome distinction of being the world's single deadliest infectious disease. In 2015 alone, the epidemic killed 1.8 million people worldwide. A far cry from the image of a disease consigned to the past, TB remains a painful reality for millions across the world and in Europe. In

particular, countries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) are those who harbour the greatest percentage of multi drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases. Fifteen out of the world's 27 countries hardest hit by MDR-TB are situated in EECA.

- The data cited from KPMG can be downloaded [here](#).
- ** The data is derived from research commissioned by the Wellcome Trust as part of an independent review into anti-microbial resistance supported by the UK's Department of Health
- Dr Margaret Chan's statement on TB can be found [here](#).
- The [TB Europe Coalition](#) is an informal advocacy network of non-governmental organisations and individuals that share a commitment to raising awareness of TB and to increasing the political will to control the disease throughout the WHO European Region and worldwide.

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