

## **Feedback for week 6 – Tuberculosis**

Glad that despite such a widely researched topic, all of you put the ideas into your own words and cited proper references. Keep it this way!

In this assignment, there were 2 aspects – prevention and treatment. However, different context requires different strategies, as illustrated with the situations in NYC and Samara.

We were not looking for long or standard answers, but rather, those which showed critical thinking. I gave good scores to those who went beyond the lecture and applied the concepts to a specific context (be it local or in developing countries). Of course, with crisp explanation too!

The first submission was rather short. But what I really like about this piece was the ability to see the problem from many angles such as the consideration of the marginalized group. It would have been perfect if you could give a more detailed explanation for each point.

In the second submission, in view of the problems with the management of TB mentioned in the lecture, this group attempted to propose new strategies, a pretty commendable effort! Each measure was well explained too.

And in future, if you have any questions regarding the assignments, feel free to ask us. We are always here to help! (Don't worry, we are nice people.)

That's all for this week. Have a good break and all the best for your mid-terms!

## SUBMISSION 1

1. Measures society should take to stop the spread of TB
  - Raise awareness among residents
    - when develop symptoms of TB to receive testing
    - isolate themselves to prevent passing on to others.
    - raise awareness of TB through social media, posters, letters.
  - To regular checks on dormitories (that were occupied by large amount of workers)
    - To avoid overcrowding in the dormitories.
    - More applicable for developed countries like Singapore
  - Improve the infrastructure of the living area
    - To avoid too many people living in an area, so that to minimize the chances of passing on TB
    - To improve the living condition, so to prevent developing TB
    - More applicable to less developed countries.
2. Specifically what type of resources should be invested in testing
  - After researching, we suggest investment should be placed in to focus on the following group on testing of TB.
    - Children, who naturally weaker immune systems
    - People in close contact with untreated infectious TB cases, eg. Prostitutes
    - People with underlying medical conditions such as HIV infections and diabetes.
  - Have mobile clinic should be organized to go around higher risk areas to test on the people.
    - Overcrowded areas, slums
  - To have government funds to subsidize the cost of testing, so people won't avoid taking the test.
3. What should be done to encourage people with disease to regularly take their treatment?
  - Let patients pay a starting deposit, which could be rebated every time they complete a part of the treatment. The deposit could be scaled base on the patient's income, so that it is affordable to them and does pose a barrier to poorer patients.
  - Set up an anonymous treatment centre, where people who wish to stay anonymous could also receive treatment. Eg. Illegal workers. Patients can be given a number in order to facilitate the regular DOTS treatments.
  - Have social workers to conduct regular checks and send reminders.
  - Have a mobile checkup team to check on patients that were not attending their treatment regularly.
  - Sent the doctors to hold treatments at the patient's house for those that couldn't travel.
  - Develop a social group, which patients could make friends with other TB patients and feel less lonely during their monthly treatments.
4. What is the single most important suggestion?
  - We feel that the completion of the treatment process is important. Hence, the rebate is most important and effective because people will have a greater incentive since they already paid the full course and should finish the entire treatment

## SUBMISSION 2

### 1. Measures for Testing

Resources: Financial & Human Capital Investment

- **Develop effectiveness and decrease costs of different types of tests:**

- Sputum test
- TB skin test
- TB blood test

→ *We feel that societies should divert more resources and fully utilise and integrate technological advances with the public health sector where imminent diseases are widespread, rather than on extravagant/ luxury commercial products. Seeing how most cases of TB are curable, getting tested and diagnosed early would be highly beneficial in prolonging lives, as in the case of Paul.*

- **Increase accessibility to channels:**

- Subsidised regular screenings at places prone to TB outbreaks
  - Subway stations, parks where homeless are
  - Ghettos where poverty is prevalent

→ *We believe in attending to the needs of the poor and vulnerable, for they not only deserve rights to health, but also rights to health care. Increasing accessibility to testing makes it more convenient for those with TB as by having such channels more accessible and more affordable for them. They will be encouraged to go for regular screenings which can in turn help to reduce the outbreak of TB. Affordability is a huge factor that determines if these people go for regular screenings as most of them are poor and will not be able to afford such screenings on a regular basis. Furthermore, we wish to reiterate the importance of getting tested and diagnosed early.*

### 2. Measures to Increase Receptivity To/ Encourage Treatment

- **Appeal to their emotions**

- Putting innocent lives at risks (family members, public...)
- How their deaths would impact their families (emotionally, financially...)
- Use of moving advertisements to increase awareness
- Information brochures/posters to help keep TB contained (staying at home, covering mouth with tissue when coughing/sneezing, proper disposal of tissue, wear a mask in public)

→ *Appealing to their emotions is a subtle yet powerful way to tackle the spread of TB. This is because by exposing them to the potential risks of getting their loved ones infected, it touches a personal part of their life, and would push them to act more responsibly and critically as they realise it does not only pertain to their own life but the lives of their loved ones as well.*

- **Technology as means to increase convenience of TB treatments**

- e.g. Alarm pill box
- TB treatments require regular intake of antibiotics
- Alarm pill box can serve as a reminder to take their pills by sounding the alarm so patients will not have to worry about forgetting to take their medication.

→ *Regular consumption of pills over a specified period of time is essential in order for TB to be cured. Hence, by providing a convenient device that reminds people to take*

*their medication, we are able to eradicate problems of human error such as forgetfulness, etc.*

- **Government Policies**

- Financial Aid/Subsidary

- Encourages patients with TB to seek for treatments with less worries of financial difficulties.

- Equitable distribution of resources (medications, treatments, etc) and their availability to the public

- *Cost of TB treatments can be expensive to some people with lower income. Suffering from TB will further set these people back financially. If the government offers financial aids to these people, TB can be treated within a shorter period of time and these people can return to the workforce once they have recovered.*

- **Education**

- By educating those infected with tuberculosis about the risks of the disease
  - Informing them about how contagious the disease is
  - This can be done by professionals visiting places that have high rates of tuberculosis and giving talks, brochures etc.

- *People will tend to believe the words of professionals who have lots of experience . As such, through education from those who are more experienced (e.g. professionals), those infected with TB will be more receptive to the treatments as they will know about the risks of TB*

## **Most Important Suggestion**

### **Government policies**

The most important suggestion our group believe is to liaise with policy makers since they have the most control over each society's resources. We recognise that the TB industry is not a lucrative one, since it affects mostly the poor. The private sector is unlikely to be booming anytime soon, hence requiring government intervention to counteract the imbalance in distribution of resources. Especially after knowing Samara's situation, we've come to a consensus that making governments recognise the emergence of TB is key in implementing all of the suggestions aforementioned.