

Scoping meeting for the development of guidelines on nutritional/food support to prevent TB and improve health status among TB patients

Geneva, 2-4 November 2009

Background

Undernutrition is a well-established risk factor for TB. It is clear that improved population level nutritional status can have significant impact on TB morbidity and mortality. Improved nutrition status in the population helps prevent TB.

However, there is no wide agreement on the value of nutritional/food support as a part of the treatment and case-management strategies for people with active TB, or latent TB infection.

The opinions and practices concerning nutritional/food support as a part of the TB treatment package varies widely across national TB programmes, partner organizations engaged in TB control implementation, and clinicians.

Implementers of TB control activities, clinicians, and donor agencies are requesting guidance from WHO and other partner agencies on the value, type and operational aspects of nutritional/food support.

There is a close relationship between TB and HIV in many countries with HIV driving the TB epidemic and TB seriously impacting on the health of people living with HIV. Nutrition and food security play an important role in people's vulnerability to both diseases. Furthermore HIV and TB programmes often face the same challenges in delivering nutritional support.

However, there are no internationally agreed guidelines on nutritional/food support to TB patients, nor on how national TB programmes can contribute to improved population nutrition status. The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the World Food Programme (WFP) is planning to jointly develop such guidelines, following WHO Guideline Review Committee (GRC) guidance.

Objectives of the meeting

- To review the current evidence-base on TB and nutrition
- To review the potential for collaboration between TB and HIV programmes and nutrition
- To identify important knowledge gaps
- To define specific questions that can be addressed through further systematic reviews
- To define specific research gaps that need to be addressed with new original research
- To agree on scope of guidelines on nutrition and TB
- To establish a Guideline Group and agree on terms of references
- To outline plan of work (including commissioned systematic reviews) and budget for the full guidelines development

Specific areas for which evidence will be reviewed

- Undernutrition as a risk factor for TB infection and active TB disease: strength of association and population attributable fraction
- (Cost)-effectiveness of nutritional/food support for improving TB treatment outcomes (improving smear/culture conversion, cure, and treatment success; and reducing death, failure, and relapse)
- (Cost)-effectiveness of food packages as an incentive for improving TB treatment adherence
- (Cost)-effectiveness of nutritional/food support for nutritional rehabilitation of undernourished TB patients
- (Cost)-effectiveness of nutritional/food support for people with latent TB infection (reducing TB incidence)
- Special considerations for TB patients with HIV infection
- Lessons that can be learnt from HIV and nutrition
- Special considerations for people with multi-drug resistant TB
- Special considerations for children with TB
- Special considerations for people with diabetes

Participants

- Scientists
- Partner organizations with experience of nutritional/food support and nutritional/food support to TB patients
- Selected countries with experience of nutritional/food support to TB patients
- WHO Guideline Review Committee

Preparatory work

1. Inventory and summary of systematic review on nutrition and TB
2. Survey of current practices concerning nutrition/food support within national TB programmes, and partner organizations
3. Preparation of a "state of the art" background paper for the meeting, which summarizes (1) and (2), and elaborates on the objectives and specific areas to review, and suggests next steps
4. Fund raising. Currently, there are funds only for the preparatory work and the November meeting

Role division

- WHO Nutrition Department is taking the lead to organize the meeting
- WHO Stop TB Department, UNAIDS, and WFP will work together with the WHO Nutrition Department to complete the preparatory work
- Role division for further work will be decided in the November meeting.