What is PAL?

The Practical Approach to Lung health (PAL) is a syndromic approach to the management of patients who attend primary health care services for respiratory symptoms.

The PAL strategy targets multi-purpose health workers, nurses, doctors, and managers in primary health care settings with successful TB control programmes in low- and middle-income countries.
Why is PAL useful?

- Up to one-third of patients over the age of 5 years attending primary health care (PHC) settings seek health care for respiratory symptoms.

- Ideally, TB cases should be detected among patients with respiratory symptoms within PHC settings.

- In many countries, standardized procedures have been clearly defined for the management of TB and acute respiratory infections (ARI) in children, but no such formulations exist for patients over 5 years of age with respiratory symptoms.

- In PHC facilities, the majority of patients with respiratory symptoms aged 5 years or more are identified as non-TB cases, and at least 80% of them are considered to be ARI cases.

- Antibiotics are prescribed for more than two-thirds of patients with respiratory symptoms.
How is PAL a component of the Global DOTS Expansion Plan?

- PAL has been designed to contribute to improving the case detection component of the Global DOTS Expansion Plan (GDEP) for TB control.
- PAL improves the quality of TB diagnoses through the appropriate management of patients with respiratory symptoms.
- PAL contributes to improving the quality of health care services.
What are the objectives of PAL?

- To improve the quality of respiratory case management for the individual patient.
- To improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of respiratory care within health systems.
What are the components of PAL?

- Standardization of health service delivery through the development and implementation of clinical practice guidelines.
- Coordination among different levels of health care as well as between TB control programmes and the organization and management of general health services.
What is the focus of PAL?

PAL focuses on four priority respiratory diseases among patients aged 5 years or more who seek treatment for respiratory symptoms:

- TB,
- ARI, with a focus on pneumonia,
- asthma,
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
The development and implementation of the PAL strategy need to be adapted to the regional and country health context.

PAL adaptation must take into account differences in epidemiological situations, population age structures, levels of economic development, and resources available within each level of health care.
What is the impact of PAL on TB control?

- Secures and empowers TB control in epidemiological transition and/or when health system changes.
- Improves TB case detection and the quality of TB diagnosis.
- Assists national health authorities with ongoing health sector reform, and keeps TB high on the agenda.
- Provides information on TB detection within general health care services.
What is the impact of PAL on general health services?

- Improves planning and health resource management.
- Addresses the challenge of the burden of respiratory diseases in PHC through the provision of an essential health care delivery package.
- Improves the health management information system.
- Improves the referral system for respiratory conditions in general and TB in particular.
- Strengthens PHC services to increase attendance by patients with respiratory symptoms.
- Reduces the prescription of drugs in general and antibiotics in particular.
- Strengthens the competence of PHC workers.
- Strengthens the confidence of the population in PHC services.
What are the requirements for introducing PAL in a country?

- Political commitment to adapt and develop the PAL strategy.
- Assessment of the existing conditions to adapt the PAL strategy.
- Formulation of an agenda for adapting, developing and implementing the PAL strategy.
- Establishment of a national/regional working group on PAL.
- Adaptation and development of national PAL guidelines and training materials for PAL implementation.
- Baseline survey on respiratory care management, testing of training materials, PAL implementation in pilot sites, and a study of the impact of PAL in these same pilot sites.
- Review of PAL activities carried out so far.
- Development of a plan for PAL expansion nationwide, including implementation costs.
- Adoption and support of the PAL expansion plan by the national health authorities.