

Headline: How to curb TB in rural areas - experts
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How to curb TB in rural areas - experts

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Improved diagnosis and treatment of Tuberculosis (TB), especially in rural and disadvantaged communities will curb the disease, some experts have said.

They spoke at an international workshop on improving case detection and providing comprehensive care to mitigate tuberculosis and its complications, including Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDRTB) organised for medical personnel by Loving Gaze at St Kizito Clinic in Lekki, Lagos.

The event tagged: "Update on clinical and laboratory methods in Tuberculosis and STIs and laboratory infection control", was supported by Rotary Rimini, Italy and Rotary Club Victoria Garden City, Lagos. It gathered medical personnel from mission and private clinics, hospitals, Lagos Catholic Archdiocese School of Health Technology, schools of Nursing and Midwifery from the Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

St Kizito Clinic Medical Director, Dr. Alda Gemmani, said the diagnosis of active TB could be complex since its symptoms are similar to other diseases.

Nigeria has one of the lowest detection rates in the world, with only 16 percent of cases being notified to the National TB and Leprosy Control Programme (NTLCP), she said.

She cited a report by the World Health Organisation on TB prevalence in Nigeria, which ranked the country fifth, among 22 high TB burdened countries with over 450,000 new cases and 150,000 deaths yearly.

She noted that the national intervention plan for reducing tuberculosis was effective but that proper diagnosis and increasing cases of drug resistance among the rural and urban poor had become a challenge.

Gemmani said: "St. Kizito Clinic has been in operation in Nigeria for 25 years, serving a number of communities in Jakande-Lekki, Lagos, Idi-Araba of Mushin, and Oreta of Ikorodu and remains committed to strengthening tuberculosis' diagnosis and care in these communities and beyond.

"St. Kizito Clinic is the only reference for comprehensive diagnostic and treatment TB/DOTS unit with experienced and trained health personnel and laboratory in Eti-Osa LGA. Since 2005, when the TB/DOTS unit was established, up to 1,040 patients have successfully completed anti-tuberculosis therapy and more than 5,810 received diagnostic and other TB/ HI- related care yearly.

Head Medical Microbiologist, The Greater Romagna Hub Laboratory - Cesena, Italy, Prof Vittorio Sambri, underlined the importance of medical personnel and lab technicians training to minimise wrong diagnosis of TB, which has a grave consequence on the patients.

He noted that the more antibiotics were used inappropriately, the more bacteria would learn to defend themselves.

"We must be careful with the right regiment and treatment in order to avoid any form of resistance.

"I believe that the antibiotics that are not used in the right way have a lot of side effect, not only to the patients but the whole community because they do generate resistance and that means anybody that will require the antibiotic will have some trouble with getting the right treatment," he said.

He added that right diagnosis remained vital for the treatment and management of TB in Nigeria.