



TB CONTROL IN INDIA - GS III MAINS

Q. TB elimination in India necessitates a unified focus on person centered care, addressing social determinants of health, and embracing innovation. Elucidate (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *TB control in India calls for person-centred solutions*

What's in the news?

- Globally and in India, tuberculosis (TB) continues to loom large as a public health challenge impacting millions.

Key takeaways:

- Despite ambitious goals set by India's health authorities to eliminate TB, the challenge is huge and progress is not fast enough.
- Access to efficient and high quality care — diagnosis, treatment and support — is still not available to every person suspected to have TB or diagnosed with the disease.
- As India grapples with the complexities of controlling TB, we need a paradigm shift urgently — one that places those affected and their lived experiences at the centre of tackling this ancient disease.

Government Measures:

- The **MoHFW** along with various development partners of the **Health Ministry launched the Tuberculosis (TB) Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan in 2021** under the NSP India 2020–25 for TB Elimination in a major mission activity for ending the epidemic of TB by 2025.
- Despite ambitious goals set by India's health authorities to eliminate TB, the challenge is huge and progress is not fast enough.

Present Scenario:

National Strategic Plan for Eliminating TB (2020-25):

NSP India 2020–2025 intends to accelerate the national response to TB. The actions include

- Provide top-priority reinforcements to the existing workforce.
- Scale up private provider engagement.
- Changes in approach from passive community to active community participation and ownership.
- Investment in TB surveillance staff and systems for accurate, complete and timely information.
- Deployment of new precision diagnostic tools.
- Support patients comprehensively throughout treatment.
- Redesign and pursue targeted active case finding.



- Deploy and evaluate ambitious plans to implement TB preventive treatment in households and other close contacts, children, People living with HIV (PLHIV) and other locally defined “high-risk” groups, using new and short regimens.

Need for a Person-centered Approach to TB Care and Management:

1. TB as a Human Crisis:

- Tuberculosis is one of the ten major causes of mortality worldwide. The trend of increasing TB cases and drug resistance in India is very disturbing.

2. TB as a Gendered crisis:

- Women and other gender minorities living in violently patriarchal societies face unique challenges in accessing timely diagnosis and treatment for TB.
- It is particularly difficult for gender minorities to seek care due to structural and social barriers, stigma in the health system and widespread poverty.

3. TB as an Economic Challenge:

- The largest indirect cost of TB for a patient is income lost by being too sick to work.
- Studies suggest that on average three to four months of work time are lost, resulting in average lost potential earnings of 20% to 30% of annual household income.

4. TB as a Social and Environmental Challenge:

- For centuries, TB has been linked anecdotally with environmental risk factors that go hand-in-hand with poverty - indoor air pollution, tobacco smoke, malnutrition, overcrowded living conditions and excessive alcohol use.

5. Need for Strengthening Community-Based Care:

- Efforts are needed to strengthen community-based TB care models, empowering frontline healthcare workers to deliver comprehensive care that is closer to where patients live.

6. Need for Mental Support:

- It is important as survivor narratives tell us the stigma, discrimination and mental stress they go through, not to mention the side effects of treatment.

7. Need to Address Discrimination:

- While TB can affect people of any class, religion, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status, it disproportionately affects the most marginalized in society, including children, the urban poor, prisoners and people living with HIV/AIDS.
- It is needed to address that disease has gone beyond being a health crisis alone.



Challenges in Curing TB Burden in India:

1. Medicalization Over Humanitarianism:

- TB has often been overly medicalized, neglecting its broader societal and humanitarian impacts.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Groups:

- TB disproportionately affects marginalized populations, exacerbating social and economic disparities.

3. Antibiotic Misuse and Drug Resistance:

- Unregulated antibiotic use and non-compliance contribute to drug-resistant TB strains.

4. Limited Access to Diagnostic Testing:

- Cost and accessibility issues hinder widespread molecular testing for TB.

5. TB-Diabetes Mellitus (DM) Dual Burden:

- The coexistence of TB and DM poses additional challenges to treatment outcomes and healthcare systems.

10-point Agenda Towards Ending TB

1. Early Detection:

- Emphasizes the importance of prompt identification of TB symptoms and the necessity of compulsory screening for close contacts.

2. Precise Treatment Categorization:

- Urges knowing the resistance status to tailor treatment regimens effectively.

3. Treatment Adherence and Follow-up:

- Highlights the need for sustained treatment adherence and leveraging technology for monitoring compliance.

4. Zero Mortality:

- Advocates for mitigating TB-related mortality across all forms of the disease.

5. Controlling Drug Resistance:

- Addresses the man-made phenomenon of drug resistance and the need for better regulatory mechanisms.

6. Assessing Drug-resistant TB Extent:

- Emphasizes the importance of data collection to inform control programs and resource allocation.



7. Availability of Appropriate Medicines:

- Calls for addressing procurement challenges for DR-TB medications.

8. Integration into Larger Health Systems:

- Stresses the need for strong referral networks to ensure comprehensive care.

9. Dynamic Notification System:

- Calls for improvements in real-time TB data capture and sharing.

10. Population Mobility and Migration:

- Highlights the importance of ensuring portability of TB treatment within the country.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Leveraging Technology and Innovation:

- The adoption of AI and digital health solutions for TB diagnosis, adherence, and surveillance can revolutionize the way TB care is delivered and accessed in the country.

2. Working on Treatments:

- The path to TB elimination in India requires a concerted effort to prioritize person-centered care, address social determinants of health, and embrace innovation.
- By investing in developing better vaccines, we can hope to ultimately eliminate this airborne disease.

The journey towards TB elimination in India necessitates a unified focus on person-centered care, addressing social determinants of health, and embracing innovation.