

Getting To Zero: By Addressing LTBI In Asia

In 2011 the first Asian TB Experts community meeting was held in Tokyo Japan, since the conception of the meeting it has grown in momentum and importance. This annual meeting is convened in the spirit of advancing TB control in Asia.

In August 2016, over 100 key opinion leaders from 20 countries met in Taipei, Taiwan. This year's meeting heralded a new chapter in the global response to TB by bringing together low and high burden country representatives from Asia to discuss **Getting to Zero: By Addressing LTBI in Asia**. Regional and international experts convened to identify and address the challenges and best practices that should be adapted in order to achieve the targets set by The WHO End TB Strategy.



Picture above the participants of the 5th Annual TB Experts community meeting.

The theme of the meeting was introduced by the keynote speaker **Dr. Steve Kuo**, the Director-General of CDC Taiwan, with a rousing appeal: "International cooperation is the single most important strategy to fight TB... Infectious disease respects no border, efforts to fight it should have no border as well." TB causes more deaths globally than any other infectious disease, including HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Anita Chan, Associated Director of Taiwan CDC, presented on the Taiwan: Experience of scaling up and implementation of LTBI testing and treatment. The implementation of intensive contact screening initiatives in Taiwan, have demonstrated success in reducing TB over the past decade. Taiwan has emphasized Directly Observed Treatment for compliance as well as expanding the number of individuals screened in contact investigations.

Dr. Richard Brostrom, of the US CDC and Chief of the Hawaii TB program, gave a very compelling presentation illustrating the strong correlation between TB and Diabetes. Dr. Brostrom's emphasized that In order for Asia to harness growing momentum behind the idea of bringing the global tuberculosis (TB) epidemic into the elimination phase, focus on key cities and pandemics such as diabetes will be paramount. In Asia, Diabetes (DM) is a rising tide and serves as an important reservoir of TB disease and LTBI. Its impact and contribution to TB cases surpasses HIV in most Asian countries and the syndemic is growing unabated. The consequences of diabetes on reactivation of TB and poorer outcomes on TB relapse and death despite TB treatment makes the vacuum of awareness and action of the growing syndemic more urgent than ever. If not addressed, diabetes threatens to stall or reverse progress on the global fight against TB.

Dr. DJ Christopher, gave a very sobering story describing the high risk to Health Care Workers (HCW) in high incidence countries like India. His data showed that 90% of nurse trainees in Southern India were TST positive within 10 years of service in Indian hospitals. This study alone how critical it is to protect the HCW from this deadly disease.

Although the heterogeneity of the region was widely recognized, an overarching consensus emerged, in order for the countries in Asia to achieve the ambitious goal of the END TB Strategy there has to be a paradigm shift in TB control, which Transcends all epidemiological spectrum of the countries in Asia.

This meeting was coordinated by STOP TB Japan. Chair by Dr. Toru Mori, board representative for stop TB partnership Japan and Dr. Huang of Taiwan Anti TB Association.

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