TB Alert India presents at the World Lung Health Conference, Hyderabad
Vikas Panibatla, CEO, TB Alert India presented a poster entitled "Navigating health systems for TB-Diabetes Care: Journeys for diagnostic and treatment care for TB-diabetes comorbid patients in India", on October 31, based on findings from a qualitative research study of 23 TB patients with diabetes mellitus registered at three Designated Microscopy Centres in north Delhi.
Mr. Panibatla said that there is an emerging need to better integrate TB-diabetes diagnostic and treatment services across public and private sectors to ensure the continuum of care. A consideration of patients' perspectives, cultural context and addressing their unmet needs is crucial for successful implementation of collaborative activities for TB-diabetes patients.

Mr. Panibatla was also a part of a symposium on Latent TB Infection and a panel at the India Mahasabha during the conference.

THALI communication materials released at ‘TB Harega, Desh Jeetega’ campaign launch

The Central TB Division (CTD) released a set of communication materials for the THALI project through dialogues, songs, jokes and dance. The dance forms included Kuchipudi, Yakshagaman, Kolatam, Burrakatha and Palleśadhulu from THALI’s program states of Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
THALI also showcased the contributions made by different stakeholders through their ‘All Hands on Deck’ session at Community Connect. The panel of six leaders, including a healthcare provider, a cured patient, a community structure representative, a community leader, a local politician and a social activist, through engaging and colourful visuals, presented their experiences and achievements of community communication through the community brochures, flipcharts and design of a handbook on TB for elected representatives. These were released by Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare; Ms. Preeti Sudan, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, and Dr KS Sachdeva, Deputy Director General, TB, CTD, among other dignitaries.

Karnataka state RNTCP adapts THALI communication materials

The Karnataka state RNTCP in October decided to integrate THALI’s patient information brochure and community handout into its set of communication materials used for community awareness. The RNTCP will now print and distribute the information brochure to TB patients and caregivers, which will allow them to understand the disease better and also mark their treatment adherence on the calendar incorporated into the design. The community brochures, which carry basic information on TB, will be distributed to ASHAs and Anganwadi teachers to disseminate further, and will also be used at other sensitization events.

Specimen Collection and Transportation case study wins USAID competition

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Vikas Panibatla, CEO, TB Alert India, presents a poster on TB-diabetes

TB Alert India arranges a community visit for Claire Forlani, actor and ambassador to The Union, as well as ten media delegates on October 29 during the World Lung Health Conference. TB Alert India visited the Kaladera Poolbagh Development Society, a community structure mobilized by the THALI team in Malakpet. They also interacted with two TB patients identified by THALI.
On November 2, another group of media delegates from China visited another community structure, the Sri Vaibhava Lakshmi Mahila Sangham, a Self-help Group which has been supporting THALI field staff for the last two years.

Communications

The Central TB Division (CTD) released a set of communication materials developed by KHPT at the launch of the ‘TB Harega, Desh Jeetega’ campaign in New Delhi on September 25. KHPT contributed a set of 12 posters as part of its June agreement with the CTD to support the development of communications resources to be disseminated across the country. These posters on individual and collective responsibility to end TB, and informational posters on Direct Benefit Transfer payments under the National Health Mission, were designed to provide essential information and generate a dearth of materials on HIV-TB co-infected patients, during patient support groups, and ANMs were linked to community structures for handholding support. The community organizers, who supervise ASHAs, played with the ASHAs to understand patients’ needs and difficulties, and made joint visits to the area, and will attend their meetings, going forward.

Engaging ASHAs and Medical Officers in Warangal to integrate THALI activities

The District TB Control Officer of Warangal and the THALI project team worked with medical officers of two urban primary health centres (UPHCs) in Warangal to train ASHAs and community organizers to conduct visits to patients as the THALI community health workers are phased out of Warangal. The UPHCs held role plays with the ASHAs to understand patients' needs and difficulties, and made joint visits to the patients with the ASHAs for handholding support.
The community organizers, who supervise ASHAs and ANMs were linked to community structures in the area, and will attend their meetings, going forward.
The medical officers from the UPHCs of Deshapent and Rangashanipet are now addressing the needs during patient support groups, and THALI staff are working with them to integrate THALI activities such as patient support groups into their regular activities.

Government Engagement

KHPT holds consultations to develop HIV-TB communication materials

The THALI team in October met with the District RNTCP team in Bagalkot, Karnataka, to discuss the need for communication materials developed specifically for HIV-TB patients. The RNTCP team, including the District PPM Coordinator, Senior Treatment Supervisor and TB medical officers, said that there was a dearth of materials on HIV-TB co-infection, and that posters, handouts and flipcharts would be useful for staff at Designated Microscopy Centres and Anti-retroviral Therapy (ART) centres. THALI’s consultation process also included drop-in discussion with TB patients and co-infected patients, during which they spoke about their experiences during diagnosis, stigma, and the kind of treatment support they needed.
Based on these insights, the team will focus on the development of materials to enhance the understanding of ART counsellors, link workers, frontline workers and peer educators of community-based organizations, on issues including treatment adherence, nutrition support, and patient benefits.

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KHPT holds residential perspective-building workshop for community structures

As part of THALI’s initiative to strengthen community structures and empower them to take up TB control in their areas, the program team conducted an overnight perspective-building workshop for community structure representatives on October 3 and 4. The event, conducted at the premises of the Janapada Loka folk art museum in Ramangaram district, was attended by 96 representatives from Bengaluru Urban. The participants were led into two days of sessions facilitated by the communications team and supported by the THALI community coordinators, covering the basics of TB, the importance of teamwork, the need for clear communication and understanding what TB patients are going through so as to better support them. These sessions involved a series of games to highlight the topics, followed by a discussion with community structure representatives. At the end of the training, the participants planned the activities they could potentially conduct in the next year, including health camps and awareness rallies, presenting the same to other participants.

KHPT expands activities at Patient Support Group meetings

THALI Community Coordinators decided to introduce new activities during patient support group meetings in Bengaluru in order to increase participation and create interest in attending meetings. Members of the community structures, most often self-help groups, came in to demonstrate how to make a healthy salad recipes for the patients at the meeting and the prepared dishes were distributed to the patients for consumption. In September, participants were taught to prepare healthy juices from inexpensive vegetable and fruits like cucumber, tomato, beetroot and carrot. THALI staff received good feedback from the patients attending, who said they were more interested in attending future meetings.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL)

Integrated Digital Adherence Technologies pilot evaluated by external team

An external group of consultants appointed by the Central TB Division, in coordination with WHO, USAID and BMGF, carried out an evaluation of the uptake of Integrated Digital Adherence Technologies in Belgaum district from September 23-27. The five-member team undertook a field visit, coordinated by KHPT, to understand the overall progress of the initiative, the implementation challenges and key learnings.

The group found that technology could complement treatment adherence, but could not replace monitoring. They also found that putting patients on technology improve their autonomy and self-efficiency, however, for the initial one or two months, patients needs close monitoring until they are accustomed to it.

USAID-appointed evaluation team visits THALI intervention areas

An external team of evaluators visited the THALI intervention areas of Bengaluru and Belgaum between September 26 and October 3, and Hyderabad and Warangal from October 10-12.

The evaluation team visited state and district RNTCP officials, and private providers networked under the JEET project to talk about the interventions and which components of the organizations’ initiatives were particularly important to them. The team also conducted focus group discussions with community structures including self-help groups and labour unions, community health workers (CHWs), and interviewed TB patients at various stages of treatment receiving THALI care and support services. THALI also demonstrated a training session for CHWs on the usage of communication materials. The findings and learnings from the evaluation team are awaited.

For more information on the above activities, please contact Vrindea Manocha, Sr. Communications Officer, at vrindea.manocha@khpt.org

Bringing hope to the homeless: THALI’s initiative in Bellary

Rajendra (name changed), 28, lives near the auto stand at the Bellary train station. He came from a village in North Karnataka to work in Bellary, and found work at a nearby hotel. When he started coughing and becoming weaker, the hotel staff told him to go to a doctor. Once Rajendra received a TB diagnosis, they fired him from his job. Rajendra has no family, and has nowhere to go. He spreads a blanket out under a tree on the hard concrete and got his medicines. The team also arranged a visit from Dr Sushma, from the technical team, to check his condition and offer medical advice. KHPT is proud of our staff’s commitment to continue their support and the initiative of the auto drivers to help Rajendra until he is back on his feet.

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Mangalagowri, a member of the Aishwarya Self-Help group, which conducted a health camp in Abbigere, Bengaluru

“"In one year of THALI, my notification rate has risen almost 300% from 112 to 332 per year to 112! When I got support from THALI, I became enthusiastic myself, and started taking TB control (out of the facility) to the public."”

Dr Pratap Kallogi, Medical Officer, Deshainp Urban PHC, Warangal

"This is my second life and I realize that there are many people suffering with TB and have proper knowledge and guidance. Also many people are dying as they don't know the facts of TB. I am committed to reach as many people as possible in times of TB awareness.""

Nageshwar Rao, a TB patient advocate in Hyderabad who is supporting TB patients on treatment

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