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Topic: Malnutrition treatment and prevention

Title: Is Nutrition emerging as a priority for addressing Tuberculosis? New Public Programs on Nutrition Supplementation for Tuberculosis patients in three states of India

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Tuberculosis (TB) is a major public health problem in India. The disease has a serious equity dimension also as TB prevalence as well as mortality rates are worse in the poorer sections. India has high burden of under-nutrition as well. These two problems interact with each other. TB patients with better nutrition show better outcomes.

WHO guidelines recommend counseling on nutrition for TB patients. However, counseling alone seems inadequate and supplementation may be needed in food-insecure populations. Evidence is emerging for Nutrition-Supplementation for TB patients to improve outcomes. India has a national program for free treatment of TB but nutrition-supplementation is not included.

In Chhattisgarh, a poor state in India, based on research and advocacy carried out by civil-society organizations, the state government has funded a program to provide nutrition supplementation to TB patients across the state. Governments of two more states Kerala and Maharashtra have started initiatives to provide nutrition-supplementation for Multi-drug-resistant TB patients. The preliminary results in all three states have already shown promise in terms of improved weight gain.

Further study is needed to understand effectiveness of public interventions in improving outcomes for TB patients. Further, it needs to be studied which design and management processes are most appropriate for satisfactory outcomes including aspects like providing food versus cash, multi-sector action and governance.

The problem of TB requires urgent attention to nutrition both for its prevention as well as cure. The emerging public programs of nutrition-supplementation to TB patients need to be researched for framing suitable policies.