



## **Family Digest 21**

**1st November 2018**

### **TB: a major public health issue, but preventable and curable**

78 000 people in South Africa died of tuberculosis (TB) in 2017, and while this is fewer than estimated for the previous year, TB treatment coverage remains low at 68 percent, meaning that up to one third of all people living with TB are being missed.<sup>1</sup> The disease is particularly prevalent in the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and in general it remains at crisis point in South Africa.

South Africa is one of six countries accounting for 60 per cent of the global tuberculosis burden. The other BRICS countries also experience a high incidence of TB, but South Africa has a dual epidemic of HIV and TB, and with the latter being the leading cause of HIV-associated mortality in Africa, it is the top cause of death indicated on death certificates. There are over 400 000 active cases of TB in South Africa every year. While the number of cases is declining, this it is not happening nearly fast enough. As a result, despite TB being preventable and curable, it killed 1.6 million people around the world in 2017 and is ranked as the No 1 infectious disease killer.

A study conducted in late 2017 suggests that, “Although the vast majority of individuals with tuberculosis engaged the public health system, just over half were successfully treated. Urgent efforts are required to improve implementation of existing policies and protocols to close gaps in tuberculosis diagnosis, treatment initiation, and successful treatment completion.”<sup>2</sup> The treatment of TB requires a continuum of care which must be followed, and patients must complete the treatment process. Failure to do so results in the spread of multi-drug resistant TB, which undermines recovery.

While TB is a very infectious disease, it is also a disease of opportunity and thrives in conditions of overcrowding and poverty; it is easily contracted by those with compromised immune systems. Notwithstanding the above, South Africa has been a global leader in ensuring widespread access to bedaquiline, the only new anti-TB drug developed in five decades. Furthermore, President Cyril Ramaphosa was one of only 15 world leaders to attend a recent international summit to decide on how best to fight this frustrating disease: a mass-killer which is both curable and preventable.

The following links provide more information on the prevalence of TB here and elsewhere, and on efforts to combat it, including a new vaccine.

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**Lois Law**  
**Project Co-ordinator**

[https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-09-26-you-cant-fight-tb-if-you-dont-show-up/?tl\\_inbound=1&tl\\_groups\[0\]=80895&tl\\_period\\_type=3&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=First%20Thing%20Wednesday%2026%20September%202018%2010X%2057&utm\\_content=First%20Thing%20Wednesday%2026%20September%202018%2010X%2057+CID\\_8c1d369c23b0ac3](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-09-26-you-cant-fight-tb-if-you-dont-show-up/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=80895&tl_period_type=3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=First%20Thing%20Wednesday%2026%20September%202018%2010X%2057&utm_content=First%20Thing%20Wednesday%2026%20September%202018%2010X%2057+CID_8c1d369c23b0ac3)

[84376b94b3cdd6864&utm\\_source=TouchBasePro&utm\\_term=You%20cant%20fight%20TB%20if%20you%20dont%20show%20up](https://www.health24.com/News/2017/09/06/10-things-know-tb-south-africa/)

<https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/2017/09/06/10-things-know-tb-south-africa/>

<https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/TB-in-south-africa>

<https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/tb-remains-the-worlds-deadliest-infection-according-to-the-who-20180919>

[https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO\\_HQ\\_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=ZA&outtype=PDF](https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO_HQ_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=ZA&outtype=PDF)

<https://www.tbfacts.org/tb-statistics-south-africa/>

<https://www.tbfacts.org/tb-south-africa-hiv/>

[https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs\\_s](https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs_s)

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-10-01-diabetes-and-tb-top->

[https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs\\_s](https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs_s)

[https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/216/suppl\\_7/S702/4595546](https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/216/suppl_7/S702/4595546)

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/new-tuberculosis-vaccine-raises-hope>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs\\_s](https://www.health24.com/Medical/Tuberculosis/News/calls-for-action-at-historic-tb-meeting-20180925#cxrecs_s)

<sup>2</sup> [https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/216/suppl\\_7/S702/4595546](https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/216/suppl_7/S702/4595546)