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Use of digital health apps to increase rates of TB diagnosis and provide faster treatment

25 April 2016 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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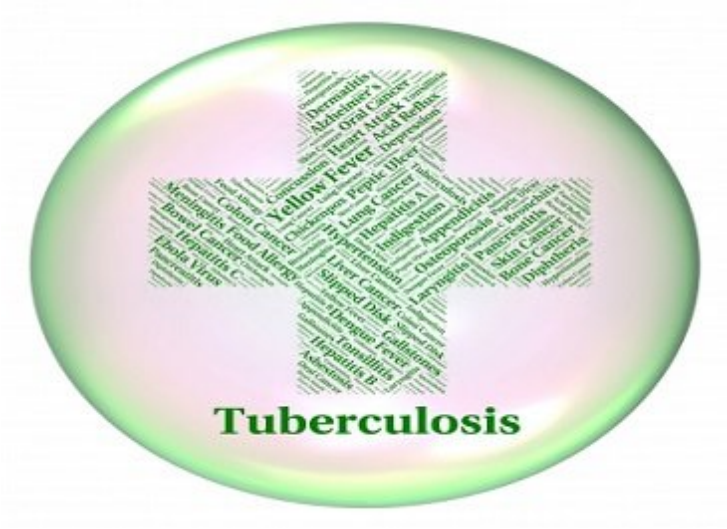

The International Union Against TB and Lung Disease, TB Alert and Population Services International (PSI), presented four white papers on Tuberculosis and Non-Communicable Diseases at the Geneva Health Forum which took place from April 19th to April 21st this year.

The first paper, presented by PSI, was on the investigation of community pharmacist knowledge and dispensing behaviours and their implications in diabetes and hypertension management. The pharmacist's active role in patient treatment and care was found to be significant and correlated with better, positive patient outcomes. In addition, the study revealed a need to enhance overall knowledge of community pharmacists on diabetes and hypertension, with an emphasis on knowledge of misconceptions and dispensing practices.

The second paper discussed a project by TB alert called the 'Pratam Initiative', where the objective was to bring about active and sustained involvement of pharmacists and Rural Health Care Providers (RHCPs) in the Government's RNTCP. The focus was on the role that a pharmacist plays in early identification of TB in people showing TB symptoms and referring them to RNTCP facilities for testing and treatment. The project looked at rural, semi-urban and slum areas.

Common patient perceptions toward NCDs such as diabetes and hypertension were examined in the third paper presentation by PSI. The major barriers to treatment were inability to afford treatment and lack of access which made patients consider the use of non-conventional medicines (such as herbal medication) over prescribed drugs to overcome these issues. The study discussed how such factors negatively affect a patient's likelihood to take preventive actions such as early screening and adopting healthy behaviour.

The last paper presented by the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease focused on the introduction of two interoperable android apps designed for the rural healthcare providers (RHCPs) and lab technicians (LTs) at the TB microscopy centres. Encouraging findings of the study showed an increased number of people diagnosed, improvement in referrals, and an overall reduced delay in diagnosis and treatment initiation of TB patients through this innovative and affordable mHealth initiative.

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Eli Lilly has partnerships with the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease and with TB Alert for the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership and with Population Services International (PSI) for Project UDAY - a comprehensive Diabetes and Hypertension Prevention and Management Program in India, supported by an unrestricted grant from Eli Lilly and Company under the Lilly NCD Partnership.

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