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Experts address latent TB infection in India at union world conference

26 October 2020 | News

KHPT partners with Central TB Division and USAID to host panel at Union World Conference on Lung Health

Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT), in collaboration with the Central TB Division (CTD) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), organised a panel discussion on Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI) in India on October 23 at the 51st Union World Conference on Lung Health.

The panellists included Dr Kuldeep Singh Sachdeva, Deputy Director General- Tuberculosis, CTD; Dr Reuben Swamickan, Chief of Infectious Diseases Division, USAID/India; Dr Karuna Sagili, Senior Technical Advisor, TB & Communicable Diseases, The Union South East Asia (The Union), India; Dalbir Singh, President, Global Coalition Against TB (GCAT); Mohan HL, Chief Executive Officer, KHPT; and Sunitha D, a 32-year-old TB survivor from Karnataka.

"It is well established that a focus on TB alone will not contribute to the reduction in future incidence. TB preventive treatment for people with LTBI is equally important to reach our goal of eliminating TB," said Dr Sachdeva. He acknowledged the contributions of USAID, KHPT and other partners for bringing in the much-needed focus on LTBI, through initiatives such as their Breaking the Barriers project."

Addressing the key role of global partnerships, Dr Swamickan said, "An absence of active community participation and patient-centric approaches for vulnerable populations has resulted in missing TB cases and high proportion of sub-optimal treatment outcomes."

Dr Karuna Sagili talked about the importance of leveraging community networks to address LTBI. "The active engagement of TB survivors during programmatic management of LTBI, from policy to implementation, monitoring and evaluation will ensure that we are able to plug the "leak" from the TB care cascade," she said.

Singh spoke about GCAT's policy initiatives in helping shape the National TB programme and highlighted the gaps in testing for LTBI. Mohan spoke about KHPT's experience in implementing TB patient-centred interventions with a strong community engagement component.

Sunitha said, "Do not be afraid if you have TB, it is not a permanent disease it is curable. You must follow proper treatment procedure and complete the course, you have to stay strong and overcome it."