Tuberculosis treatment may be shortened

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According to Dutch researcher Hanneke Later-Nijland, it may be possible to shorten the duration of treatment for tuberculosis. Due to the long duration of treatment, not every patient sees it through. Partly because of this, tuberculosis is one of the most lethal diseases in developing countries.

The research conducted by Hanneke Later-Nijland is helping to shorten the duration of treatment for tuberculosis. Later-Nijland studied different groups of Indonesian tuberculosis patients. She believes it may be possible to shorten the duration of treatment by increasing the dose of the important drug rifampicin. After increasing the dose, the concentration of the drug in the blood plasma was higher than expected.

In addition, the tuberculosis patients in Later-Nijland's study did not experience more or different adverse effects at an increased dose than at a standard dose. Therefore increasing the dose of rifampicin might make it possible to reduce the length of treatment for tuberculosis without additional consequences. Research involving larger groups of patients will be needed to confirm this conclusion.

Tuberculosis and diabetes

Later-Nijland also conducted research into the reduced effectiveness of treatment in tuberculosis patients who also have type 2 diabetes. Her research revealed that the concentration of rifampicin in the blood plasma of patients with type 2 diabetes was lower than in patients with tuberculosis alone but who were administered the same dose. Whether

tuberculosis patients with type 2 diabetes would benefit from a higher dose of rifampicin is a subject for further research.

Hanneke Later-Nijland started her research in October 2004 at Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre. She carried out her research within the Indonesian, Tanzanian and Dutch research network Poverty Related Infection Oriented Research, or PRIOR. PRIOR focused on research into poverty-related infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV and
malaria, and was funded by NWO.

Source: NWO

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