

Millions of diabetics could die of tuberculosis

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A third of the world's human population is infected with a dormant tuberculosis bacteria, primarily people living in developing countries. The bacteria presents a lifelong TB risk. Recent research out of the University of Copenhagen demonstrates that the risk of tuberculosis breaking out is four times as likely if a person also suffers from diabetes. Meanwhile, as a diabetic, a person is five times as likely to die during tuberculosis treatment. The growing number of diabetics in Asia and Africa increases the likelihood that more people will succumb to and die from tuberculosis in the future.

A research group from the Faculty of Science at the University of Copenhagen has just completed a major research project in Tanzania in which they have documented that diabetes is far more widespread than previously thought.

The risk of dying from tuberculosis is increased if a person also has diabetes. In the past, diabetes was most commonly associated with the Western world while tuberculosis was more widespread throughout the [developing world](#).

"Our studies show, firstly, that diabetes is hastily advancing in [developing countries](#), not just in Asia, but in Africa as well. And secondly, that as a diabetic one is four times more at risk of developing tuberculosis and five times as likely to die under tuberculosis treatment," reports PhD student and physician Daniel Faurholt-Jepsen who has written his doctoral dissertation on the basis of the study.

With the dramatic increase in the spread of diabetes, even among the poorest, there is a need to strengthen prevention. The results of the study demonstrate that diabetes is a severe threat to the control of tuberculosis:

"Tuberculosis kills more than a million people each year. The figure may be much higher in the future if nothing is done now. We should develop better international guidelines for a combined treatment of diabetes and tuberculosis patients as well as better diagnostic methods, which can cheaply and effectively diagnose diabetes among [tuberculosis](#) patients," emphasises Daniel Faurholt-Jepsen.

More information: Daniel Faurholt-Jepsen defended his PhD dissertation 'The Double Burden: The role of diabetes for tuberculosis risk, manifestations, treatment outcomes and survival' on July 6 at the University of Copenhagen's Faculty of Science.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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