

Health experts call for improved TB care for refugees

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Refugees traveling across countries in Europe must have better access to Tuberculosis (TB) diagnostics and treatments in order to prevent a rise in new cases of the disease, according to experts writing in the *European Respiratory Journal* today.

TB is globally a major cause of mortality, affecting 9.6 million people with 1.5 million deaths in 2014. Vulnerable populations, which often include migrants and refugees, have an increased risk of TB infection. In addition, the rise in the level of cross-border movement has increased the need for collaboration between national health systems.

Experts from the European Respiratory Society (ERS) and the European Region of the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease (The Union), call for an improvement in care for this group of people, in order to fulfil a basic human right for the individual living with the condition and to continue efforts to control and eliminate the disease.

The authors of the paper published online today, urge health authorities and other stakeholders to prioritise TB care, prevent and control among refugees. They call for quality surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research among this group of people, and the promotion of universal access to treatments and care.

To help aid efforts to manage TB cases across borders in Europe, ERS and the World Health Organization (WHO) have established an online platform that encourages treating clinicians to share case notes with each

other when a patient has moved countries. It is the first platform in Europe that will exchange patient data on TB and is part of the TB Consilium, which allows clinicians across Europe to submit questions on difficult-to-treat TB cases and get advice from internationally recognised experts.

Professor GB Migliori, an author on the paper and Secretary General of ERS, said: "It is crucial that we facilitate better cooperation across borders. Our new online platform is one method of doing this but we also need better coordination from national [health authorities](#) and financial support from the European Commission to improve care for this group of people. We know it is possible to eliminate TB and every effort should be made to prevent the spread of this deadly disease."

Professor Ivan Solovic, President of the European Region of the Union and Chair of the ERS Ad hoc Working Group on TB Advocacy, commented: "TB is not easily transmitted and it is treatable, therefore, efforts should be implemented to detect and treat it promptly. If better treatment options are not available for this group of people, there could be a rise in the number of cases of the disease and related deaths, which could also further contribute to increases in drug-resistant cases of TB."

More information: Call for urgent actions to ensure access to early diagnosis and care of tuberculosis among refugees, M. Dara, I. Solovic, G. Sotgiu, L. D'Ambrosio, R. Centis, D. Goletti, R. Duarte, S. Aliberti, F. M. de Benedictis, G. Bothamley, T. Schaberg, I. Abubakar, B. Ward, V. Teixeira, C. Gratziau, G.B. Migliori, [DOI: 10.1183/13993003.00377-2016](#)

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