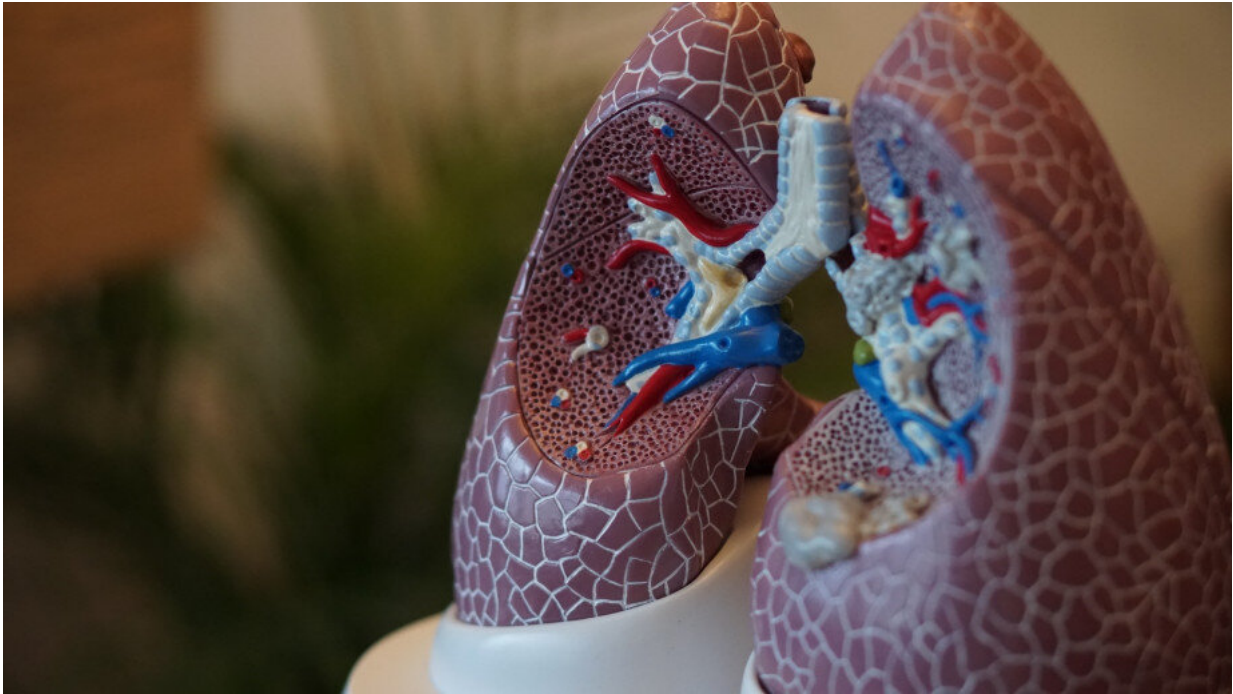


Study: Long-term disabilities linked to TB

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Credit: Robina Weermeijer/Unsplash

It's estimated that a quarter of the world's population is infected with tuberculosis (TB).

Now, these people are being given a fighting chance to avoid long-term disability caused by the [disease](#) thanks to world-first research undertaken at The Australian National University (ANU) in partnership with the World Health Organization.

Despite being both curable and preventable, every day, nearly 28,000 people will be diagnosed with TB and 4,000 people will lose their lives to the disease. It's one of the world's deadliest diseases and for those who don't lose their lives, TB can cause significant long-term disability.

Until now, little has been known about the prevalence of TB related disability and the researchers are the first to examine disabilities caused by the disease at a global scale.

"This is the first systematic review that has attempted to synthesize the global literature on all TB related disability," Dr. Samantha Colquhoun from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at ANU said.

The team reviewed over 130 publications, assessing a total of 175 data sets, which were generated using information on over 200,000 patients with TB. The researchers found that among a range of disabilities associated with TB, mental [health](#) disorders, respiratory impairments and musculoskeletal impairments were the most common..

The research has global significance for the treatment of TB related disabilities. Researchers have mapped the spectrum and prevalence of TB related disabilities, and believe that this information is critical to ensure health services and policy in countries can provide appropriate care to patients where TB is common.

"These findings should inform the [global community](#) including national TB programs of the burden of TB related disability, in order to diagnose, prevent, limit and mitigate it," Dr. Colquhoun said.

Dr. Kinley Wangdi from the ANU Department of Global Health hopes the research will improve treatment approaches to TB related disabilities, making treatment proactive and preventative.

"Looking at the implications of our research for patients, we now have a much better understanding of the types of disabilities people are likely to develop as a result of their TB diagnosis, the risk factors associated with these different disabilities," he said

"This will allow treatment to be tailored in comprehensive treatment packages to reduce the risk of onset of these [disabilities](#)."

Provided by Australian National University

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