

Research spotlights significance of social support in TB treatment

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A research paper co-authored by Harrisburg University of Science and Technology Population Health Instructor Dr. Nirmal Ahuja has determined that social support plays a significant role in tearing down tuberculosis (TB) treatment barriers and improving patient adherence to treatments.

The paper, 'If not for this support, I would have left the treatment!': Qualitative study exploring the role of social support on medication adherence among pulmonary tuberculosis patients in Western India," recently was published by *Global Public Health*.

The study shares feelings and social support-related experiences among pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) patients in Western India. A semi-structured interview guide was designed, and 37 in-depth interviews were conducted.

Participants shared that empathy, compassion, trust, neglect, tangible aid, strained relationships with in-laws, health provider's support, strength, and motivation influences their adherence to treatment.

"Social support is not just the mere presence of a family member or a friend, what matters is the quality of the relationship we share with that person and what are our experiences with that support system," Ahuja said. "This descriptive [qualitative study](#) has shared personal feelings and social support-related experiences among pulmonary TB patients in Western India. I believe it would add value to the existing literature and could potentially benefit toward developing patient-centric intervention strategies and actions which is one of the key steps in building the TB cascade of care in India and globally."

The study highlights important ramifications for developing patient-centric social support intervention strategies, TB policy, and practices. It has shown that, 'if not for this support,' patients would have left their treatment, mainly because this debilitating disease robs people of physical, social, economic, psychological, and emotional well-being far beyond the period when treatment is being administered.

However, it also acknowledges that addressing [social support](#) is not the only tool, and TB elimination overall will require an optimal mix of enhanced biomedical, social, economic, and policy interventions.

More information: Ahuja Nirmal et al, 'If not for this support, I would have left the treatment!': Qualitative study exploring the role of social support on medication adherence among pulmonary tuberculosis patients in Western India, *Global Public Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2021.1965182](#)

Provided by Harrisburg University of Science and Technology

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