

Low tuberculosis case detection in Gokwe North and South, Zimbabwe

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Background: Case detection is an important component of tuberculosis control programs. It helps identify sources of infection, treat them, and thus break the chain of infection.

Objective: To determine the reasons of low tuberculosis case detection in Gokwe Districts, Zimbabwe.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted. We used interviewer administered questionnaire for nurses and patients, checklists, and key informant interviews.

Results: Thirty-eight nurses, forty-two patients and seven key informants were interviewed and 1254 entries in tuberculosis register were reviewed. Nurses correctly defined pulmonary tuberculosis, listed signs and symptoms, preventive measures and methods of tuberculosis diagnosis. Exit interviews showed 9/42 (21%) of patients presenting with cough were asked to submit sputa for examination and asked about household contacts with tuberculosis. About 27% of patients who were sputum positive in the laboratory register were not recorded in the district tuberculosis register. This contributed to the high proportion of early defaulters among tuberculosis suspects.

Conclusion: Low tuberculosis case detection was because nurses were not routinely requesting for sputum for examination in patients presenting with a cough or history of previous treatment for cough. Nurses should routinely request for sputum for examination in patients presenting with a cough or history of recent treatment for cough.

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