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Prevalence of latent tuberculosis infection among health workers in Afghanistan: a cross sectional study

Ghulam Qader Qader

Public Health Institute (PHI), Afghanistan

Background: About one third of the world population might be infected with latent tuberculosis infection and health care workers(HCWs) are among the high risk categories because of their added professional exposure to TB besides the risks they share in the community. Afghanistan is one of the high TB burden countries and the health care system is weak because of decades of conflict.

Design: This cross section study was conducted to assess the burden of LTBI among health care workers in Afghanistan. Health facilities in Afghanistan was selected through a systematic sampling technique and all HCWs working in the sampled health facilities at the time of the study were invited for the study. Socio-demographic variables and exposure variables were interviewed for those willing to participate in the study and Tuberculin Skin Test(TST) was given to determine LTBI.

Results: Out of the total of 4648 HCWs invited for the study, 3975(85.5%) agreed to participate in the study and TST was provided. In 3686(92.7%) of the HCWs the TST induration were read and the prevalence of LTBI was 47.2%. In multivariate analysis only those with Body Mass Index of 30 and above [AOR 1.7(1.04-2.8)] and married HCWs (AOR= 1.99(1.65-2.4) were associated with increased risk of LTBI. HCWs with normal BMI[AOR 1.06(0.73-1.55)] and the underweight(BMI of 18 and below) AOR of 0.87(0.5-1.49) had no association with increased risk of LTBI.

Conclusion: LTBI is high among HCWs in Afghanistan and actions should be taken to prevent and possibly treat LTBI. The WHO did not recommend the LTBI treatment for HCWs in high TB burden countries at this point in time. We recommend to institute TB infection control measures in the health facilities and periodic screening of HCWs for TB to early diagnosis and treatment.

Biography

Ghulam Qader Qader is a medical doctor by profession and have master in public health. He have plenty of experience in Tuberculosis, research, evaluation and monitoring. In addition, he also have experience in master in health development.

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