



PRESS RELEASE

DNA-based detection test improves battle strategy against TB by finding undiagnosed cases in the community

19 January 2017 | Cape Town | A recent randomized controlled trial revealed that 53% more patients initiated therapy for tuberculosis (TB) after a new diagnostic tool (GeneXpert MTB/RIF) was used to screen for TB in more than 2 261 individuals in the community.

“Our goal is to ensure that undiagnosed patients in the community are detected and taken up in the health care system, adhere to treatment, lead healthy productive lives and in so doing, curb the spread of TB in our communities, says Professor of Medicine at the University of Cape Town, Keertan Dheda.

Healthcare workers, using GeneXpert, were able to detect more cases of TB in remote communities. Using a mobile van, the team were able transfer primary health care to the location of people who would normally not have convenient access to those services. It was also evident that access to these communities significantly reduced the time to initiate treatment.

“The major hurdle to finding TB at a community level was the lack of a sensitive and user-friendly diagnostic test. If we can find an easy test for TB and take this to scale, we are on a trajectory to improve our battle against this global killer”, says President & CEO of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), Professor Glenda Gray.

Tuberculosis remains a global health emergency and one person dies of TB every three (3) minutes. This killer is known to have claimed more than a billions lives in the last two decades. The scourge intensifies as 30 to 40% of cases globally remain undiagnosed in the communities of TB-endemic countries. The diagnostic gap at the point of care impedes the ability of medical personnel to rapidly diagnose TB in patients, ultimately slowing the progress to treatment and care.

This landmark trial funded by the EDCTP and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), is geared to inform control strategies for TB-endemic countries, and suggests that point of care technologies such as the highly portable GeneXpert Omni Platform could effectively be used to find cases and hence limit the transmission of TB in communities.

Issued by:

Linda Rhoda

Manager: Marketing and Communication

University of Cape Town

+27 21 406 6685 / +27 82 4511 045

www.uct.ac.za

Aziel Gangerdine

Head: Corporate & Marketing Communications

South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)

+27 21 938 0697 / +27 71 866 9887

www.samrc.ac.za

ENDS.