

Global TB Time Bomb

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Tuberculosis continues to infect the world population and makes TB the world's largest single infectious cause of death due to a single pathogen. Of more import is the occurrence of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases which are thought to be largely due to official neglect and the breakdown of delivery of health care often in conjunction with HIV infection. MDR-TB is also documented to be very highly prevalent due to the breakdown of health delivery infrastructure, and also due to prescription of inappropriate drugs, lack of availability of drugs, drug diversion and use of combination tablets or capsules that are not bioavailable.

We are always very effective in blaming our patients for noncompliance and have blamed the current MDRTB epidemic on this factor. However, it is becoming more apparent that physician nonadherence and official neglect of good TB practices is perhaps an even greater factor relation to ongoing problems in TB control.

TB will never be eliminated until this lack of compliance on all levels is addressed and corrected.

Of note, the key ingredient in carrying out a meaningful productive TB control or elimination program is political will. The physicians may have the ability and tools, the patients may even have the motivation, but the policymakers must foment political will to ensure an effective program.