



International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
Health solutions for the poor



WORLD **DIABETES** FOUNDATION

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT UNDERSCORES ACTION NEEDED AGAINST TB AND DIABETES

Summit in Bali positioned to make decisive headway against the looming co-epidemic

28 October 2015 (Paris, France) – Today health officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva released a comprehensive report on the global scale of tuberculosis, a contagious airborne disease. The report includes staggering data—chiefly, that TB has replaced HIV/AIDS as the world’s most deadly infectious disease, measured by numbers of people who died from the illness in 2014. The report comes just as global health experts are set to convene early next week to address TB and its co-mingling with another massive illness: diabetes. Together, the two diseases present a looming co-epidemic.

Health officials will join leading researchers, business and technology leaders, and civil society advocates from every continent in Bali, Indonesia on 2-3 November at the world’s first international summit on TB and diabetes in an effort to avert a global health crisis.

“Indonesia has a high burden of both TB and diabetes, and the WHO report strengthens our resolve to take action,” said Indonesian Minister of Health Dr Nila Moeloek. “We are hosting the first summit of public health leaders to urgently mobilize a global response to the double threat of TB-diabetes.”

Diabetes weakens the immune system, and triples a person’s risk of getting sick with TB—which killed 1.5 million people in 2014 according to the new WHO report. Today, 387 million people are affected by diabetes, with 77 per cent of cases in low- and middle-income countries where TB is prevalent. Diabetes is projected to affect 592 million people by 2035, which experts project will only fuel the global TB epidemic.

Recent studies have shown between 16 and 46 per cent of people living with TB also have diabetes, and many are unaware of it. With an estimated 9 million cases of TB each year, the convergence of the two diseases threatens to become a major public health crisis.

“Healthcare systems must prepare to deal with this challenge, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where the challenge is most severe,” said Anders Dejgaard, Managing Director of the World Diabetes Foundation. “It can be done. Leadership within training and advocacy will be essential to ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped to diagnose and take care of these two diseases as they increasingly appear together in the same patients.”

The summit marks the world’s first major effort to mount a concerted defense against the looming TB-diabetes co-epidemic. Attendees will review the latest scientific and clinical information on the state of the two diseases. They will also sign The Bali Declaration, which will commit them to taking cost-effective actions, such as the implementation of bidirectional screening: automatic TB testing for people living with diabetes, and vice-versa.

“The new WHO report should sound the alarm for leaders around the world,” said José Luis Castro, Executive Director of The Union. “We must answer this news with a global campaign to unite efforts in the fight against TB and diabetes. We cannot continue to let two preventable and treatable diseases kill millions and hinder economic development. It is time to take action.”

How TB and diabetes exacerbate each other

TB and diabetes interact with each other on a number of levels, with each disease exacerbating the other. Diabetes triples a person’s risk of developing TB. Among people who are being treated for TB, those with diabetes remain contagious longer, respond less well to TB treatment and have a significantly higher likelihood of a recurrence of TB after successful treatment or dying from the disease.

TB can temporarily increase the level of blood sugar, a condition known as impaired glucose tolerance, which is a risk factor for developing diabetes. Moreover, some drugs used to treat TB (especially rifampicin) can make it more difficult to control diabetes due to the way that they interact with oral diabetes medications. There are growing concerns that oral diabetes medicines can decrease the effectiveness of TB medicines. Clinicians do not yet know how to optimise glucose control in people who have both TB and diabetes.

TB killed an estimated 1.5 million people in 2013 according to the World Health Organization—making it the world’s second-leading cause of death from an infectious disease. One in three people worldwide are living with a latent TB infection that could develop into active TB disease at some point in their lives.

Six of the 10 countries projected to have the greatest numbers of people living with diabetes by the year 2035—China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Russian Federation—are also classified as high TB-burden countries by the World Health Organization.

About The Union

Since its founding as a global scientific organisation in 1920, The Union has drawn from the best evidence and expertise to advance solutions to public health challenges affecting people living in poverty. The Union is currently progressing solutions for tuberculosis, HIV, tobacco-related diseases and other lung and non-communicable diseases. With close to 17,000 members and subscribers from 156 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and 11 offices in Africa, the Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and South-East Asia.

For more information, visit www.theunion.org

About the World Diabetes Foundation

The World Diabetes Foundation is an independent trust dedicated to the prevention and treatment of diabetes in the developing world. The Foundation supports sustainable partnerships and acts as a catalyst to help others do more. From 2002 to September 2015, the World Diabetes Foundation provided 109 million USD in funding to 398 partnership projects in 117 countries, focusing on awareness, education and capacity building at the local, regional and global level. For every dollar spent, the Foundation is able to raise approximately 2 dollars in case or as in-kind donations from other sources.

For more information, please visit www.worlddiabetesfoundation.org

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