

TB Patients diagnosed at the Lifeline Clinic

Rebecca Taylor, Elizabeth Smith, Sharon Smart – October 2015

Background

The Lifeline Clinic provides free healthcare to San Bushmen. TB prevalence in this population is high, with increasing numbers diagnosed at the clinic.

This study was performed to obtain information about patients diagnosed with tuberculosis at the clinic and how their diagnosis was achieved, hopefully identifying areas for improvement, and determining whether our patients differed from the national population.

Methods

All patients (38) diagnosed with tuberculosis at the clinic between May 2014 and July 2015 were included. Their clinic notes were reviewed to obtain demographic information and details about their diagnosis.

Full information for all patients was lacking due to incomplete clinic notes and ongoing management being performed via the state clinic.

Results

63% patients were male. Their age range was 2-73 years (median 37). 36% were TB relapses. 64% had a current TB contact. 31% cases were extrapulmonary. There was no HIV coinfection. Figure 1 shows the diagnostic tests. Diagnosis was often complicated; more than one investigative procedure was often needed.

4 deaths are known. 2 diagnoses were only confirmed at post mortem despite high clinical suspicion of tuberculosis and appropriate investigations performed.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The age range and sex distribution of our patients is similar to nationally. However there was more extrapulmonary tuberculosis. This may be because diagnosis is easier in this group, but we are concerned it means a diagnosis of tuberculosis is being missed in the larger population.

The death rate of 10.5% is higher than nationally. This may be related to the extreme poverty endured by our patients.

The lack of HIV coinfection is significant.

Identifying the differences in our patients has helped us focus our attention on appropriate management, and highlighted that we may be missing a significant number of patients and need to increase consideration of the diagnosis.

Figure 1: TB diagnostic method

