

Accessibility of community to health services for TB in Kutkai Township, Northern Shan State, Myanmar

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Abstract

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted to explore accessibility of health services among TB patients from Kutkai Township, hard-to-reach area, who had taken treatment at Kutkai Township Health Department (THD). A total of 120 face-to-face interviews, 23 in-depth interviews and 5 key informant interviews were done in 2010. Most patients were Kachin, Chinese and Palaung; 41.7% were less than 15 years and male-female ratio was 1.07:1. Distance to THD ranged between 1-70 miles. About 32% of the patients found difficulty in accessing THD in rainy seasons and 42% of the patients were from within two-mile catchment areas. More than 29% of the private practitioners were quacks. Although 51.7% of TB patients sought treatment initially at Primary Health Facility (PHF), qualitative findings showed that most of them had tried home remedies and/or sought treatment from nearby drug-sellers. Duration of symptoms ranged from 1-913 days and patients with shortest duration sought treatment at GPs initially. Patient factors—financial constraint, not knowing the severity of disease, or being treated with herbal medicines; service factors—lack of local PHF and missed diagnosis; and geographical factors—remote and difficult access to THD were the reasons for delay in seeking treatment and sought initial treatment at non-PHF. Transportation cost, being away from home, side effect of drugs and symptom relieve were the reasons for treatment default. Among the TB patients, 34.2% were referred by Basic Health Staff and 26.7% by neighbours. Appropriate interventions should be identified to help underserved, hard-to-reach TB patients getting proper treatment without prolonged delay and enhancing treatment adherence.