

**CALCUTTA RESCUE OBSERVES “WORLD
TUBERCULOSIS DAY”
24th MARCH 2012**

World Tuberculosis Day is a worldwide event that aims to raise public awareness about the global epidemic of Tuberculosis (TB) and efforts to eliminate the disease. One-third of the world's population is currently infected with TB and India accounts for more than half the cases of South East Asia's Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR – TB) that kills thousands every year, particularly claiming patients who fail to complete the two year treatment regimen.

24th March marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch detected the cause of Tuberculosis - the TB Bacillus. This was a first step towards diagnosing and curing Tuberculosis.

What is Tuberculosis? Tuberculosis (TB), is an infectious bacterial disease caused by Mycobacterium Tuberculosis, which most commonly affects the lungs. It is transmitted from person to person via droplets from the throat and lungs of people infected with the disease. One can contract it anywhere – in a train, an airplane, in a bus – by inhaling the germs from a breath, a cough or a sneeze. This bacteria remains in the body with the immune system controlling it. Then suddenly something wipes out the immunity – be it poor diet, unhealthy lifestyle, addictions of alcohol, smoking or conditions such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Liver Disorders or HIV – and the germ becomes active.

What are its symptoms? Its early symptoms include -

- A persistent cough for more than three weeks sometimes with blood streaked sputum
- Fever, especially at night
- Loss of body weight
- Loss of appetite

Pass the Message -

- Approach the doctor in government dispensary or hospital or those run by NGOs for the treatment of TB free of charge
- Treatment is for a period of 6 – 8 months
- Though the patient may feel better in 2 / 3 months treatment should be continued for the entire period as discontinuing it may result in complicated drug resistant disease
- **An untreated TB patient may infect 10 – 15 people around him!!**

Rural DOTS Program at Calcutta Rescue

Tuberculosis Program at Calcutta Rescue

Tuberculosis (TB) is highly prevalent in Kolkata and Rural West Bengal and its incidence is rising as increasing numbers of people are exposed to the disease. Unfortunately there is a public stigma attached to TB that creates a fear, particularly amongst the uneducated. Patients are unwilling to be tested and sometimes prolong initial testing - thus remaining infectious for longer periods of time, allowing the disease to metastasize and spread.

Calcutta Rescue has been working with the government in urban areas since 1999, and in the rural areas since 2003, to put into operation the Indian Government's new TB control programme, the **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP)**. This programme uses the **WHO** recommended protocol **DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment – Short Course)**. It is being implemented in a phased manner throughout India. This programme provides diagnosis, full course treatment for TB as well as health education and follow-up care. If required patients may be referred to hospitals or nursing homes for in-patient care including cardiac surgery, dialysis, etc. which Calcutta Rescue funds.

Why DOTS?

- DOTS more than doubles the accuracy of TB diagnosis
- It's success rate is up to 95%
- It prevents the spread of TB by prioritizing sputum positive patients for diagnosis and treatment, thus, reducing the incidence and prevalence of TB

Since April 2003, Calcutta Rescue has commenced treatment of Tuberculosis (TB) with the DOTS initiative as per the guidelines of RNTCP, in partnership with the District TB Control Society in the Tamuldah and Canning area of 24 Parganas South, where high unemployment and poverty abound. A team of health workers from Calcutta Rescue has been trained to use local facilities to help identify those in the community with Tuberculosis. Once identified, the patients receive a full course of treatment and follow up care as necessary under the strict supervision of the field worker.

Urban DOTS Program at Calcutta Rescue

In 1999, as the result of an excellent track record Calcutta Rescue was selected to work as a government partner in the urban area with the Calcutta District TB Control Society (a local government agency) to put into operation the Indian Government's new TB control programme. Thus, in consultation with the Calcutta District TB Control Society and local community groups, Calcutta Rescue set up a DOTS clinic in Kolkata's *Ward 3 Belgachia area*. Calcutta Rescue provides a doctor, health workers, food and non-medical support with the TB Control Society supplying Anti TB Drugs and Sputum Microscopy for diagnosis. Calcutta Rescue also provides doctors, health workers, infrastructure support, other medical needs and nutritional benefits for vulnerable patients.

World Tuberculosis Day at Calcutta Rescue

On 24th March 2012, Calcutta Rescue got together to observe World

The program started with a short awareness walk by our school students with the theme *“Stop TB in my lifetime. Call for a world free of TB.”* The students started the walk carrying posters and placards generating awareness about the illness, its hazards, cure and prevention.

After the walk, Dr Singh, a noted MDR specialist spoke to all our patients. He made them aware of the illness and how it is spread. He also told them about the hazards of the illness and how important it is for one to complete the treatment for full recovery. He also explained to them about the myths behind the illness and how a TB patient need not be discriminated.

“Even a TB patient has the right to live like everyone”, he said.

After this a few of our patients spoke of their life before and after treatment at Calcutta Rescue. They also told the other patients, especially our new patients, about the importance of availing the full treatment.

This was followed by a short skit put up by the staff of Calcutta Rescue DOTS clinic lead by Debuprasad Chakroborty, APO Special Projects, CR. The play was beautifully enacted where they showed about the illness and the importance of getting it treated properly to avoid any hazards and also how to prevent this dreaded illness.

This awareness and message was well received by the patients. Many nodded in agreement while some seemed to be thinking over what was shown to them. The play ended with a huge applause by the patients who all felt that what was shown was highly helpful for

supported our cause with his presence at the program.

At the end of the program the patients all received a yummy treat, a surprisingly wonderful change from their usual diet. They were all very happy at the end of the day and all showed an enthusiasm to fight against this illness.

[PHOTOS UPLOADED ON FLICKR]