

Editorial: TB on the rise: but researchers are not sleeping

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ahs.v21i3.1>

Cite as: Tumwine JK. Editorial: TB on the rise: but researchers are not sleeping. *Afri Health Sci.* 2021;21(3): i. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ahs.v21i3.1>

In this September issue of *African Health Sciences*, we have picked one consistent theme: infections. An interesting infection, and of major concern, is tuberculosis. Our authors have picked several aspects and written for us insightful academic papers, which I will just highlight in passing.

The first TB paper is by Laura Madukaji and colleagues from Nigeria. They report on “Early detection of Pre-XDR TB with line probe assay in a high TB burden country.”¹ This is followed by a paper from Uganda, in which Andrew Kazibwe and colleagues report on “the yield of different active TB case finding interventions in a large urban TB project, in central Uganda.”² They describe the comparative yield of three active case finding interventions: “health facility-based screening, targeted community screening; and household contact tracing.” They discuss the merits and demerits of the different approaches. Good reading!

Diagnostics continue with an interesting practical paper by Bouzouita, on the “evaluation of PCR *pncA*-restriction fragment length polymorphism and PCR amplification of genomic regions of difference for the identification of *M. bovis* strains in lymph nodes cultures.”³ They concluded that “PCR *pncA*-RFLP and RD-PCR represent very accurate and rapid tools to identify *M. bovis* in tuberculosis lymph nodes cultures.” They contend that it can be easily implemented due to “low cost and easy use.”

The other TB papers include a report of a case of “pulmonary cryptococcosis in an immunocompetent child in Uganda” masquerading as TB, which illustrates the importance of the adage: “It is not always Tuberculosis!”⁴ This is followed by the twin infection of TB and HIV. Esra Zerdali and others⁵ investigate the factors associated with this co-infection. Work from Ethiopia⁶ also discusses TB and HIV co-infection and arrives at fairly similar conclusions: that marital status, education

level, CD4 cell count and clinical stage of the HIV were associated with HIV/TB coinfection.

Clearly, TB is still a serious illness in our region. There is need for more work in this area, especially its interaction with emergency infections such as Covid-19, Ebola and malaria. The ball is in the court of our budding and established scientists!

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