Solving the TB Puzzle

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- At the recent “End TB India Summit”, PM Modi declared intent for eliminating the disease by 2025, five years ahead of the global target.
\n
- But despite the well intentioned push from the highest levels, there are considerable challenges that make reaching the target uncertain.
\n

\n\n

What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n
- TB is a highly stigmatised and omnipresent disease in India.
\n
- It kills over a 1,000 Indians every day despite being a curable disease.
\n
- But approach towards the disease remains disempowering and paternalistic, and is largely oblivious of the multiple parameters involved.
\n
- **Infrastructure -** Accurately diagnosing, recording all diagnosed cases and treating the most vulnerable communities has been challenging.
\n
- While private sector is the dominant player for TB treatment in India, many hospitals do not have a proper TB protocol, which is worsening the situation.
\n
- Partnerships to tackle TB with communities, the private health sector, government and other stakeholders remain weak.
\n
- There is thus a need for an expanded and inclusive strategy for TB, backed by sufficient funding and rigorous implementation.
\n
- **Patient -** The most troubling aspect of TB in India is the lack of patient cooperation to ensure proper and continued treatment for the full course.
\n

- Patient continuance for treatment is a challenge because TB treatment is long drawn and affects one's earning potential drastically.
  \n
- Hence, while millions get affected, diagnosis and sustained treatment is pathetic as even accessing free treatment is financially burdening.
  \n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

\n
- **Expanding Care -** It is important to talk to TB survivors and affected communities and identify the exact hurdles for getting themselves treated.
  \n

\n\n

\n
- Expanding the treatment apparatus to vulnerable population clusters and enhancing accesses to remote terrains could help in bridging the gap.
  \n
- Simultaneously, it needs to be recognized that poor nutrition, unplanned urbanisation, and limited public awareness feed the epidemic.
  \n
- Empowering communities, and making cities more liveable and healthcare more accessible and affordable for all are also essential.
  \n

\n\n

\n
- **Technical Aspects -** Drug resistance is a serious issue and calls for moving away from standardized regimes for drug selective and targeted treatment.
  \n
- High incidences of ‘multi drug resistance’ (MDR) warrants an upfront drug susceptibility test (DST) for all TB patients to identify the exact strand of TB.
  \n
- Further, new drugs that have the potential for curing the most resistant TB strains should be made available under controlled conditions.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

