

Global parliamentarians warn of “dreadful” economic toll of tuberculosis

Failing to tackle tuberculosis will cost the world economy USD \$1 trillion by 2030, a global group of parliamentarians has warned.

New research conducted by KPMG for the Global TB Caucus, which speaks for more than 2,300 parliamentarians in 130 countries, also estimated that the disease cost the global economy over USD \$600 billion from 2000-2015.

TB was responsible for 1.7 million deaths last year, making it the world’s deadliest infectious disease. Nick Herbert, the British MP who co-chairs the Global TB Caucus, said that the report was not a doomsday scenario or scaremongering, but rather “the simple and predictable cost of the world’s failure to tackle this curable disease.

“TB was declared a global health emergency in 1993, since when close to 50 million people have died from the disease. Another 28 million will die within 15 years, by which time TB should be eliminated according to the Sustainable Development Goal target. At the current rate of progress that will actually take ten times as long to meet, and the dreadful toll will be economic as well as human.”

The estimates, based on figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO), predict that the disease will cost over a dozen countries in sub-Saharan Africa more than one per cent of GDP by 2030 with Lesotho and Mozambique among those most severely affected.

“There are a lot of intractable problems in the world but TB should not be one of them - we can treat and cure it,” said Mr Herbert. “Governments around the world want to boost economic growth, and investments in TB care and prevention will not only dramatically improve the health of their populations, but also yield a major economic dividend.”

Although the impact on their GDP will be smaller, G20 countries represent six of the ten countries set to be most heavily affected economically by the disease, and over two-thirds (USD\$675 billion) of the total estimated future costs from the disease. Over half of the world’s current cases of TB are found in G20 nations, and global health campaigners point to the G20, and particularly the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - as having a key role to play in combating the epidemic.

“In July this year the G20 recognised TB as a key priority for the first time,” said Aaron Oxley, Executive Director of RESULTS UK, a charity which campaigns on TB. “But we need much more than recognition. There is a critical market failure which is hampering the development of new drugs, diagnostics and vaccines needed to beat TB, the G20 are uniquely placed to address that market failure and this data shows that not only is there a moral imperative, but there is also a clear economic incentive for action.”

The economic calculations are built on figures from the WHO’s Global TB Programme predicting the future of the epidemic if current progress is maintained. They estimate that 28 million people will die from the disease from 2015-2030, despite world leaders agreeing

in 2015 to target the end of TB as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the current rate of progress, that target will be missed by over 150 years.

A Global Ministerial Conference on TB will take place later this week in Moscow and is considered an important milestone to a High-Level Meeting on TB which will take place at the United Nations in New York in 2018.

“The Global Ministerial Conference is hugely significant, but the High-Level Meeting will determine the future of the global TB epidemic,” said Mr Herbert. “If next year’s meeting is a success it could transform the response to the disease, but what will be needed is action, not just words. We’ve had all the global declarations TB needs. Now we actually need to beat it.”

ENDS

Notes for editors

1. For more information or to arrange an interview with Nick Herbert or Aaron Oxley please contact Matt Oliver, Head of the Secretariat of the Global TB Caucus, matt.oliver@globaltbcaucus.org , [+44 7775 694767](tel:+447775694767).
2. Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by a bacterial infection. It is transmitted through the air when a sick person coughs or sneezes. In 2016, over 10 million people fell ill with the disease and 1.7 million died, more than from any other infectious disease. The disease is particularly prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, but is found in every country in the world.
3. The Global TB Caucus is one of the world’s largest international networks of parliamentarians. It has over 2,300 members in 130 countries who work collectively and individually to press for an accelerated response to TB. It was founded in October 2014 and is led by two co-chairmen, Minister Aaron Motsoaledi of South Africa and the Rt Hon Nick Herbert CBE MP from the UK. More information on the Global TB Caucus can be found [here](#).
4. The research was commissioned by the Global TB Caucus and conducted by KPMG. The full KPMG report including methodology can be found [here](#) along with data tables [here](#).
5. The epidemiological estimates were produced by the World Health Organization’s Global TB Programme and can be found [here](#).
6. The World Health Organization declared TB a “global health emergency” in 1993. Since then close to 50 million people have died from the disease and although progress has been made, the global response is underfunded by as much as USD\$2 billion a year.
7. The G20 Leaders’ Communique from the Hamburg G20 Summit stated: “We will promote access to affordable and quality antimicrobials, vaccines and diagnostics, including through efforts to preserve existing therapeutic options. We highlight the importance of

fostering R&D, in particular for priority pathogens as identified by the WHO and tuberculosis.” Full text can be found [here](#).

8. RESULTS UK is a grassroots advocacy organisation registered in the UK and one of the world’s leading campaigning organisations on TB and drug-resistance. TB is the world’s only major drug-resistant disease transmitted through the air and has been described as “cornerstone of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).” More information on RESULTS UK can be found [here](#).

9. The Global Ministerial Conference is being hosted by the World Health Organization and the Russian Federation from 16-17 November. More information on the Conference can be found [here](#).

10. The UN High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis will take place in New York in 2018 with a precise date yet to be confirmed. It is widely considered as the most significant political event on TB for several decades and as a key test of global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.