

Tuberculosis remains one of the deadliest infectious diseases worldwide, warns new report



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According to the latest European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)/World Health Organization (WHO) report on tuberculosis (TB) surveillance and monitoring in Europe, a sharp drop (24%) in reported TB cases between 2019 and 2020 was probably exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered detection and reporting.

TB remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, second only to COVID-19, and drug-resistant TB strains are still a major concern. In the fight against TB, urgent investment is critical, especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

“Thanks to a remarkable 25% reduction in the estimated number of TB cases in the WHO European Region between 2015 and 2020, countries in Europe and central Asia met the regional action plan target and exceeded the End TB Strategy milestone of a 20% drop over this 5-year period. This is a testament to the political commitment and advances in TB testing and treatment strategies we have seen across the Region,” said Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

“However, as we mark World TB Day 2022, there is no room for complacency. Deaths from TB plateaued for the first time in 2 decades between 2019 and 2020, as COVID-19 disrupted services, leaving people undiagnosed and untreated. To ensure continued progress, we need to introduce more innovative and effective approaches in the diagnosis and treatment of TB and multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB),” he added.

As ECDC Director Andrea Ammon pointed out, “Unfortunately, the fight against TB has become even more difficult in the last 2 years. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we are seeing a sharp decrease in

notification trends, which is at least partly caused by a decrease in completeness of data. Having surveyed our Member States, we see that TB data collection could not be prioritized over COVID-19 clinical work.

Additionally, only 4 Member States were able to achieve the 85% mark for successful treatment of new and relapse cases. Now, more than ever, we must come together and urgently ramp up our efforts in the fight against TB. Let us not forget that this is still one of the deadliest infectious diseases in the world.”

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