Cross sectional analysis of knowledge about tuberculosis among previous tuberculosis cases and contacts in high-incidence areas of Vanuatu, 2023

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Abstract text

Background: In Vanuatu, an average of 90 cases of tuberculosis were reported annually between 2016 and 2020, many from the same geographic areas or from families with previous cases. There remain delays in seeking care by TB cases. There is a need to identify gaps in understanding that can be addressed to encourage timely presentation to healthcare facilities.

Methods: Two area councils per province with the highest number of TB cases diagnosed from 2018-2022 were identified. Five contacts were also targeted for interviews based on contact estimates. Informed consent was sought and an oral survey was conducted in Bislama or the local language by a trained officer. A total knowledge score was calculated. If an answer was partially right, half points were given and if no answer was given this was counted as incorrect. Mean and standard distribution were calculated. Univariate analysis was done to determine predictors of knowledge scores for cases and contacts separately.

Results: A total of 761 participants were interviewed, including 139 cases and 622 contacts from all provinces, which was 62.6% of target cases (range: 16.7% - 100%) and 56.0% of targeted contacts (range: 13.3% - 145%). The mean knowledge score was 66.7% for cases compared with 55.3% for contacts (p=<0.05). For cases no demographic factors had significant association with knowledge score. For cases, there were significant association with age group, education, and province.

Discussion: These results show that knowledge levels among previous TB cases and contacts are relatively low. Additionally, tailored education programmes are needed to specifically target different populations. There is a need to improve awareness and knowledge of TB to improve timely presentation to healthcare facilities for new cases.