

Health alert: India has 25% of the world's tuberculosis patients



An urban tuberculosis case infects more individuals per year while a similar case in rural area remains infectious for longer period, a new research has found.

India bears the highest burden of tuberculosis (TB) globally, about 25% of all cases. The new study from the Centre for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy (CDDEP) researchers have developed an approach to estimate the extent of TB in India using previous estimates from nearby countries and a current understanding of the TB transmission.

The results of their study are published in The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease.

“Results show differences in urban and rural TB. While an urban TB case infects more individuals per year, a rural TB case remains infectious for appreciably longer, suggesting the need for interventions tailored to these different settings.

“Simple models of TB transmission, in conjunction with necessary data, can offer approaches to burden estimation that complement those currently being used,” the study said.

An urban TB case will infect an average of 12 people per year and remains infectious for about one year, while a rural case will infect an average of four people per year, but remains infectious for more than two years.

“We urgently need improved estimations of the burden of tuberculosis. To implement appropriate policies and interventions, it is important to understand the current extent of the disease, as well as transmission dynamics,” said study co-author and CDDEP Director Ramanan Laxminarayan.

The study has been released just before the World Tuberculosis Day on March 24.

This is the second year of the two-year theme, ‘Unite to End TB,’ with a focus on addressing stigma, discrimination, marginalization, and overcoming barriers to access care.

According to reports, the disease is estimated to kill 4,80,000 Indians every year although it is now believed that these numbers are under-represented and the mortality could be 5,00,000 a year.