

“I felt that the human approach to TB was missing”

Oxana Rucsineanu, MDR-TB survivor and STREAM CAB member, Moldova

Oxana was treated for tuberculosis (TB) for three years. She first underwent treatment for drug-sensitive TB and then was treated for multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) for an additional two years.

“I began to suspect something was wrong when I started to lose weight and had pain in my chest. After a series of tests, it was confirmed that I had TB. The diagnosis was one of the most painful experiences,” explained Oxana.

Stigma remains a substantial issue for TB patients. “In Moldova, as is the case in many countries, the stigma associated with TB makes it incredibly difficult for patients,” said Oxana. “Although I had access to medicines, there was so much stigma and discrimination. I felt that the human approach to TB was missing.”

After two years of treatment, Oxana was cured of MDR-TB and felt compelled by her experience to join the STREAM Community Advisory Board in Moldova. “TB is more than just a medical issue. It is also social and economic, and we must make sure that there is ongoing support in order to ensure success. I joined the STREAM CAB from its foundation in December 2016. I joined the CAB as a natural reaction to my desire to be part of a process that aims to explore new opportunities for safe and effective MDR-TB regimens. There are very few former patients who would like to stay involved in TB advocacy. Instead they choose to get on with their lives and to forget about this nightmare. For me, it is a deliberate choice to be a TB activist dedicated to supporting research and development as a way to contribute to progress in addressing health issues,” explained Oxana.

“Being a former MDR-TB patient helps me in my role as a CAB member, because I see things from the inside out, and it helps me in bridging the gaps between affected community, service providers and decision-makers.” As well as being a CAB member for STREAM Moldova, Oxana and her husband Pavel, also an MDR-TB survivor, founded the Moldova Society Against Tuberculosis (SMIT) along with other TB patients. SMIT advocates for partnership and cooperation between TB patients, medical staff and authorities. It also develops activities to benefit people affected by TB and provides a space to discuss the issues surrounding the way TB is managed in Moldova.

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