Health workers’ perception of the shorter regimen in MDR-TB treatment. Qualitative evidence from Ethiopia

Mamo Girma, Laura Rosu, Ivor Langley, Jason Madan, Bertie Squire

On behalf of the STREAM collaboration
STREAM I TRIAL

- Non-inferiority trial - showed that the 9 to 11 month Bangladesh regimen is non inferior to the 20 to 24 month regimen

- 424 study participants recruited from seven sites in four countries between 2012 and 2015; two of the sites were in Ethiopia

- It was the first phase III randomised controlled trial on the shorter regimen, and this imposed many challenges (represented a learning opportunity)
METHODS

• **Aim:** To identify health workers' perceptions of the shorter MDR-TB treatment

• **Who:** Health workers from St. Peter’s and AHRI hospitals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were interviewed

• **When:** 2015

• **How:**
  o A snowball sampling technique was used to recruit key informants from each staff category along the clinical treatment pathway
  o In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional category</th>
<th>Number of workers interviewed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultant (internist)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Nurse</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Nurse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community nurse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number of workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS

• No significant changes in the role of the health care workers

• Reported increased workload related to the trial activities only (CRF completion, screening and recruitment activities, frequent follow-up visits)

• The perceived benefits of the shorter treatment for patients included:
  • Fewer side effects and most of them were minor or common
  • Reduced pill burden was thought to reduce patients’ psychological distress
  • Fewer health facility visits

• The shorter design promoted patient compliance and was considered more acceptable to MDR patients, being preferable overall.

“In the new treatment regimen, injections are given for 4 months only. This avoids patient complaints as the treatment duration is shorter than in the standard treatment. As a result, this has positive effects on the treatment adherence too.” AHRI, Study physician

“The shorter treatment duration has significant impact on individuals’ daily life. Previously, students didn’t attend school for 2 years whilst on the treatment. As the new treatment spans for 9 months, this enables students to go back to school earlier than one year.” AHRI, Study physician
THE QUALITATIVE STUDY- RESULTS

Increased health worker satisfaction:

• The number of patients who discontinued treatment was lower
• The overall health workers’ engagement was reduced from 24 to 9 months
• Reduced treatment costs from a health system perspective
• Opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge on the areas unknown to them before

Issues raised:

• Treatment not available to all patients at the time of interview
• Sometimes difficult to administer DOT at home
• Concerns regarding sustainability of treatment in the long run as limited support from local authorities

Limitations of the study:

• Small scale study, in one setting only
• Carried out by an independent researcher; researcher’s bias
• Difficult to investigate causality
• Data collected in a trial setting

To follow: patient qualitative study on the shorter regimens
CONCLUSION

• Health workers perceived that the shortened regimen was more acceptable to patients and reduced their distress

• Health workers’ satisfaction was high, with the majority of the respondents seeing the shorter regimen as better than the longer regimen

• Building strong collaboration between local governments and partners was identified as key to uptake of programme

• Ongoing training to strengthen staff capacity in managing the regimen will be required
THANK YOU

I have no Conflict of Interest to report

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