Contact Investigation for COVID-19: Lessons from TB Control Programs

Part 2

Webinar organized by KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation in Partnership with National Tuberculosis Control Programs

Highlights of key points discussed at the KNCV-led webinar held on 02 July 2020

Coordinator and speakers

Dr Degu Dare

Dr Peter Witte

Background and objectives

Contact investigation, defined as the identification and management of people who may have come in contact with an infected person, is a key component of the overall strategy for controlling infectious disease outbreaks. It has been successfully applied in tuberculosis control and other infectious diseases. As countries now start reopening economies with the changing trends in the COVID-19 pandemic, early identification of new infections will remain a vital strategy to cut transmission. Contact investigation is a key means to strengthen this early identification effort. KNCV in collaboration with TB control programs in high and low TB burden countries has organized two webinars on contact investigation. This is continuation of the webinar conducted on the 25th of June 2020. The objective of this session is to discuss practical requirements for setting up effective contact investigation strategies both for COVID-19 and tuberculosis.

Coordinator

Dr Degu Dare, Senior Epidemiologist, KNCV TB Foundation, The Hague, Netherlands.

Dr Degu Dare is a senior epidemiologist with KNCV TB foundation based in The Hague, Netherlands. He has over 20+ years’ of experience in Africa and globally including a key technical leadership role during the designing and implementation of Ethiopia’s TB contact investigation strategies.

Speaker

Dr. med. Peter Witte, Director, Institute for Hospital Hygiene, University of Bochum, Germany.

Dr Peter Witte is a Public Health specialist with many years’ of experience in the public health sector as a doctor of pneumology and internal medicine as well as specialist in hygiene and environmental medicine. He is currently the director of the “Institut für Krankenhaushygiene (hospital hygiene)” in Minden, clinic of the University of Bochum, Germany. He will share his recent successful experience in leading contact investigation for COVID-19 in Germany.

Presentation Title

COVID-19 contact investigation in a low TB burden setting: lessons from Germany.

‘Contact investigation is a key means to strengthen efforts for early identification of both COVID-19 and TB’
Key factors for Germany’s successful control of Covid-19
> Step by step measures taken to establish prevention and treatment services
- Setting up PCR testing capacity
- Triaging of patients (presumptive, confirmed and critical)
- Personal protective supplies
> Strong communication system
- Using clinic intranet
- Crisis unit was established and headed by a senior doctor
> Contact precaution: face masks

COVID PCR test sensitivity varies by the type of specimen:
- 93% - bronchoalveolar lavage
- 73% - sputum
- 63% - nasal swabs
- 32% - throat swabs
Both sensitivity and specificity vary by disease prevalence

Key lessons from both webinars
- Lessons from TB CI can benefit efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19
- TB program staff can share knowledge, expertise, and provide technical support
- Networks of TB labs are already being leveraged in the COVID response
- Steps involved in contact tracing of TB and the subsequent monitoring system can be adopted to address contact tracing of COVID-19
- The possibility that COVID-19 may last longer than similar outbreaks warrants the need for longer term strategies, including integrated approach for the two diseases
- Lessons from the COVID-19 response may be useful in reshaping our TB strategies