

Aim

The main objective of the Tuberculosis Surveillance and Research Unit is to provide a dynamic forum to collaborate, cross-fertilize and critique TB research and surveillance approaches. A complementary goal of TSRU was to foster young TB researchers to ensure a sustainable stream of passionate TB

"The first question for us must be: which are the key indicators? The second is: How are these key indicators relevant to a clear view of the epidemiological and sociological problems in Tuberculosis? The third question is: What should we do in the future?" (H. Mahler, O. Galtung Hansen, K. Styblo, 1966)

professionals competent to fight the epidemic of the future. The main activity of the TSRU is an annual 2½ day conference, but the TSRU has also served as the birth place of many enduring collaborations, friendships, and initiatives.

"It is all a matter of conviction. I am utterly convinced that the present confusion is unnecessary and that reasonable epidemiological data can be collected. I am convinced that a lot of what we do today can be discarded. I am convinced that a picture of tuberculosis dynamics can be achieved and that this team [TSRU] will succeed in doing it." (H. Mahler, 1966)

History

The TSRU was founded in 1966, with Dr. Karel Styblo as Research Director. From the outset the meeting was seen as a rare opportunity for critical appraisal of TB surveillance methods in a collaborative and concentrated manner. The organizers originally came together to define the research agenda needed to move toward TB Elimination. The TSRU became known as a place for debate, where it was possible to get high-level feedback at the early design stages of a project, and interact informally with some of the world's TB thought leaders.

"TSRU has shaken a number of deep-rooted concepts and this has sometimes made both some of its findings, and its Scientific director, unpopular." (A. Rouillon, 1995)

TSRU designed and initiated research projects which were financed by national and international bodies. Historically the TSRU was heavily focused on epidemiology of TB infection and disease.

In the late seventies, the focus of TSRU began to shift to higher prevalence settings and to embrace a wider array of TB control topics, including: chemotherapeutic questions, emerging laboratory diagnostics, modeling, cost-effectiveness, and other critical topics of a more multi-disciplinary nature. As the topics have broadened, so too has the diversity of participants. Originally members were largely European and Asian countries approaching elimination, but starting in 1980 TSRU began to consciously court members from all over the Global South to improve the quality of the work and reduce the scientific colonialism common at the time. By 1991, the attention of TSRU members had expanded to include the role of HIV upon TB epidemiology, TB among drug users, and drug resistance patterns.

TSRU Today

"It would not be wise to go to developing countries and pick up interesting problems. Developing countries should come with concrete research proposals which could be realized in their country." (H. van Geuns, 1981).

Despite these changes in scope and audience, what has remained constant at TSRU is the dedication of the TB professionals to high level debate and mutual, constructive collaboration in the global project of TB control. The TSRU continues to fill a niche in the crowded world of meetings by

stressing the role of participatory listening and the value of interlocutors to strengthen TB science. More information on the 40 year history of the TSRU can be found in Rouillon A. *The International Tuberculosis Surveillance and Research Unit (TSRU): the first 30 years*. Int J Tuberc Lung Dis 1998; 2(1): 5-9.

