

The Role of Place in Treating Multidrug-resistant Tuberculosis:

A Grounded Theory Study on Patients' Lifeworlds and Perceptions of Treatment Environments in India

The emergence of tuberculosis [TB] cases that were resistant to all tested anti-TB drugs, reported amongst others in India in 2011, has increased the pressure for new drug regimens to cure resistant TB strains and to reduce extensive treatment periods which can last several years, e.g. up to 24 months in case of multidrug-resistant TB [MDR-TB]. It has also underpinned the significance of preventing patients from dropping out of the burdensome treatment. To decrease the risk of treatment default, patient-centred care and support programs are of vital importance. These, however, require a detailed understanding of the patients' lifeworlds, which are hugely dominated by medical routines as well as bodily, social and economic effects related to the disease. Here, health geography with its social science-informed approach to place and health care can provide valuable perspectives for designing respective programs.

Taking the need for patient support programs as a starting point, this grounded theory study explores the lifeworld of MDR-TB patients living in Indian slums, mainly in Delhi. It aims at a detailed understanding of the patients' perceptions and interactions with informal and formal treatment environments, such as the family, the immediate community, health centres and hospitals that provide MDR-TB treatment. So far, three foci have evolved to be of particular importance: 1) the patients' perceptions and handling of the ill and infectious body as a place of being in and medium of interacting with the world; 2) the changing relationship between patients, families and immediate communities that are transformed into and through informal treatment environments; 3) the experiences with formal treatment settings, particularly during the initial hospitalization, that continue to shape the patients' lives even after being discharged.

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