

Feasibility of community-wide isoniazid preventive therapy among South African gold miners

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Setting: TB rates among SA gold miners remain high (>3%/yr) despite well implemented DOTS and routine active case finding. The feasibility of implementing community-wide isoniazid preventive therapy (CWIPT) "Thibela TB", in addition to standard TB control, among South African gold miners is described.

Methods: In mine shafts randomly allocated to CWIPT, all employees are invited to participate in the study. Enrollees who do not have active TB, are offered IPT for nine months. An intensive community education and mobilization programme underpins recruitment and retention efforts, and includes establishing community advisory groups and social marketing using banners, pamphlets, comics, social and sports events, radio and TV. The community mobilization program was evaluated by focus group discussions.

Results: Between June 2006 and December 2007, 4 mine shafts were enrolled. 14,407 participants consented to the main study. 12,573 were eligible for IPT (87.3%) and 12,310/12,573 (97.9%) started on IPT. In the first two shafts to complete enrolment, 66.6% and 66.7% of the total workforce consented to the study over 9 and 10 months respectively. Focus group participants reported an exceptionally high awareness of TB, isoniazid preventive therapy, a sense of empowerment against TB and strong support for the study.

Conclusions: Implementing CWIPT is feasible. The vast majority of individuals are eligible for IPT. Community mobilization has supported rapid and large scale uptake of CWIPT.