

The experience of the 'THRio' project (CREATE Consortium) in implementing a TB-HIV operational research project by municipal health care services providers in collaboration with community activists

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HIV infection dramatically increases the risk of developing active tuberculosis (TB) in individuals with latent TB infection and increases the probability of primary TB following new infection. The impact of combined ARV and IPT programs is not known, but together these strategies could potentially reduce TB risk to extremely low levels. Tuberculosis remains a major public health problem in Brazil. Approximately 35% of HIV-infected adults in Rio de Janeiro are co-infected with latent TB. The Brazilian policies for the provision of treatment to HIV-infected people are among the most progressive in the world, but the use of IPT, however, has been very limited. THRio is a cluster randomized trial (CRT) to determine if the routine detection of latent TB in HIV-infected patients identified at 29 HIV clinics in Rio de Janeiro, followed by treatment with isoniazid, will reduce TB incidence in those clinic populations. This study will determine if implementing a policy of widespread IPT use in HIV-infected patients with access to antiretroviral therapy reduces the incidence of active tuberculosis disease in the HIV clinic population. THRio established close collaboration with the community since the beginning of the study through the community advisory board (CAB) in all the steps of the implementation. Their members were trained in different subjects including good clinical practices and TB-HIV; developed educational materials and have been following the interim results periodically. After two years the CAB was renovated with a broader participation of other community organizations. Organizing a productive collaboration with the community in a complex operational research where over 14 000 patients are followed is a complex task; nevertheless it has proven to be essential for the good implementation and the dissemination of the results as the research progresses.