



# PRESS STATEMENT

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## **TB information still lacks in communities**

Many Papua New Guineans are still not aware of what causes TB, how it is transmitted, and its treatment and how long TB treatment takes.

This is according to the study *Tuberculosis Knowledge, Attitude and Practise (KAP) and Tuberculosis Survey*, conducted by the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR).

This seven-month survey was conducted in Hiri West, Karkar Island and Asaro Valley from May to December 2013 and its findings were reported in the Institute's Partnership in Health Project - March Report, which was released last month.

The survey wanted to find out the level of knowledge people have regarding TB and in doing so, provide evidence to strengthen current interventions or develop appropriate interventions to improve TB care, treatment, management and prevention in the community.

"Understanding household-level health knowledge, attitudes and practices are essential for effective TB control in PNG," the report stated.

This supports the widely recommended approaches of equipping the population with vital TB information and providing free access to TB treatment.

Of the 1034 study population who took part in this survey, the study population from Hiri had more knowledge and understanding on the cause of TB and its transmission than those from the Asaro Valley and Karkar.

This was attributed to the higher level of education in Hiri compared to the other two sites but also the presence of TB in the community.

It also found that approximately 30-40 per cent of the respondents did not know how long TB treatment could last for and majority of them did not believe in BCG vaccination that could help to prevent TB.

"As the participants found that even though many were vaccinated with BCG, these people were later still sick with TB," it stated.

"Majority of study population did not know about risk factor for TB infection such as living in a crowded house or about HIV infection as an important cofactor for contracting TB."

The survey also found that misperceptions were common across the three study sites.

These include attributions relating to smoking and drinking, the belief that TB could be transmitted through sharing of food and utensils, skin contact with secretions from TB patients and sorcery.

Although many believed that TB was a severe illness and could kill patients and was easily spread, stigma and discrimination against TB patients and their family were common in these communities.

The study interestingly also found that health centres continue to be the main source for the dissemination of TB health education message in all three study sites while the least source being information disseminated by NGO groups, radio and IEC materials.

"Around one third of participants learned about tuberculosis from health workers while the other common sources were through family members and friends and school curriculum."

This school curriculum on TB were mainly found in Hiri West but it also shows that this is a potential sources for TB education and should be adopted in schools nationwide.

Only a small number of respondents mentioned TB awareness through NGO groups, radio and IEC materials.

This survey's findings and recommendations can be found in the Partnership in Health March 2014 Report.

This report is available for public consumption on our website. Follow this link

<http://www.pngimr.org.pg/research%20publications/PiH%20Report.pdf>

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