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Screening of tuberculosis disease among healthcare workers in a university hospital, Northern Thailand

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Background: Thailand is one of 22 countries with a high Tuberculosis (TB) burden in the world. Healthcare Workers (HCWs) are a high-risk group for TB infection in healthcare settings. Early recognition of TB prevents transmission in the hospital and improve treatment success rate.

Aim: The aim is to describe the burden of TB in HCWs during working period and early detection of new TB cases by using TB screening.

Method: A cross-sectional survey of TB screening in HCWs was performed during May to July 2016 at Chiang Mai University Hospital. The TB prevalence during the working period and incidence of new TB cases in HCWs who were suspected with TB during screening were involved.

Results: Of the 2,588 screened HCWs, 2,330 (90.1%) were nurses, 84 (3.2%) physicians and 174 (6.7%) para-medics. Seventy cases reported a history of TB disease during their working in the hospital with a 2.70% prevalence of TB in HCWs. The highest prevalence of TB was found in 66 (2.59%) nurses follow by three (1.75%) para-medics and 1 (1.20%) physician. During screening, 127 (4.9%) cases of suspect TB were found. Among these patients, five were new cases of TB disease, including four smear-negative pulmonary TB (one positive for Xpert MTB/RIF, one positive for culture) and one tuberculous lymphadenitis. The incidence of TB in HCWs in our institute was 193/100,000 population.

Conclusion: The findings of a higher incidence of TB in HCWs than general population in Thailand, should raise awareness of TB control in hospitals. Annual active TB screenings among HCWs lead to early detection and improve outcomes.

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