

This research highlight is based on **NHMS 2020 : Communicable Diseases. Volume I**

Who is this publication for?

- Disease Control Division: TB /Leprosy Sector, Ministry of Health
- Health Education Division, Ministry of Health
- District Health Office

Purpose of this summary

To share the main finding of NHMS 2020 focusing on self-reported TB-like symptoms among Malaysian.

IGNORING TB-LIKE SYMPTOMS IN MALAYSIA

ISSUE

Having TB-like symptoms do not prompt Malaysians to seek medical treatment

In 2019, an estimated 10 million people fell ill with tuberculosis (TB) worldwide. TB has been reported in all countries and across all age groups. However, TB continues to be a health issue despite being a curable and preventable disease [1].

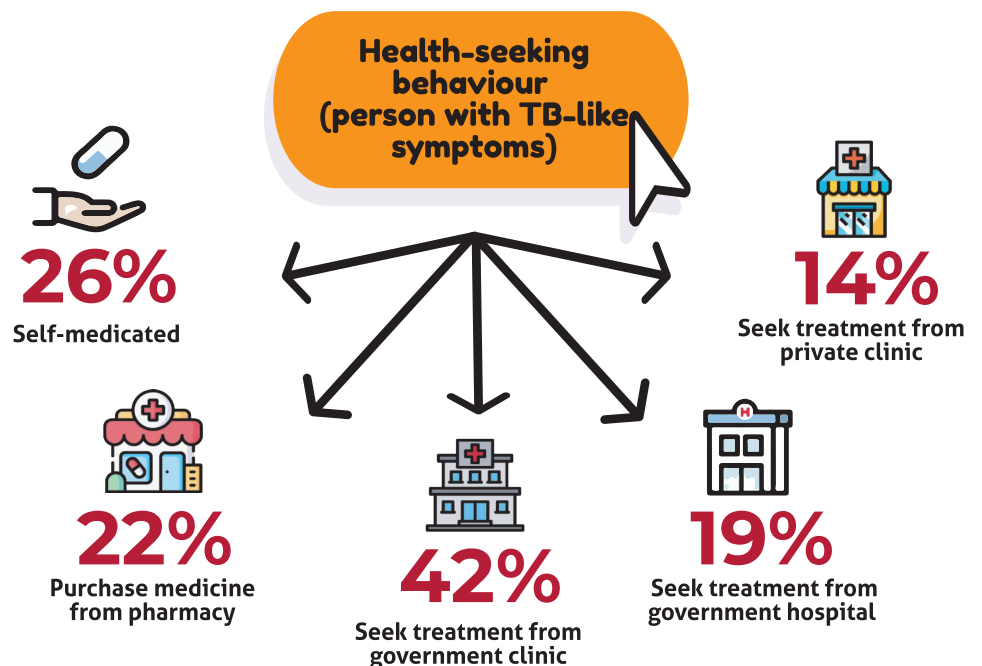
Not seeking or delay in treatment for TB can lead to long term complications, disabilities, and even death. All individuals with signs and symptoms of TB should seek medical care within 2-3 weeks of the onset of the symptoms [2]. The TB-like symptoms include dry cough, cough with phlegm, cough up blood, fever, unexpected weight loss, and drenching night sweat.

Early diagnosis and treatment which is much influenced by individuals' health seeking behaviour are important in controlling and mitigating this disease and its consequences [3].

KEY MESSAGES

2.5% Malaysian population reported having TB-Like symptoms

Estimated population **605,070**



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

For policy makers

- To develop active engagement with private healthcare facilities, community members, and civil society in assisting TB screening and preventive activities

For healthcare practitioners

- To educate the public about TB especially on the symptoms and the effect of not getting treatment
- Healthcare providers should strive to reduce incidents of TB patients who did not seek treatment with strict measures.
- To organize outreach programme targeting patients who did not seek treatment at the locality with high TB cases.

METHODS

We used data from the National Health & Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2020 to focus on communicable diseases. The NHMS 2020 was a nationwide community-based cross-sectional study design using a multistage stratified random sampling method. The survey included respondents living in non-institutionalized living quarters from 113 enumeration blocks in Malaysia. Data were analysed in account for complex survey analysis to obtain population estimates. The TB-like symptoms module was carried out on all respondents aged 15 years and above. Data were collected by trained research assistants using Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) from August 2020 until October 2020. The validated questionnaire consisting of 4 submodules: Prevalence of TB, TB-like symptoms, health-seeking behaviour and reasons for not seeking treatments. The NHMS 2020 official report has further details on the methodology used.

REFERENCES

1. Tuberculosis. Key Facts. (2020, 14 October). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/health-topics/tuberculosis>
2. Pascalina et al. Health seeking behaviour among individuals with presumptive tuberculosis in Zambia. PLOS ONE, 2016, doi :10.1371/journal.pone.0163975.
3. Dinka et al. Health care seeking behaviour among presumptive tuberculosis patients in Ethiopia. a systematic review. BMC Health Services Research. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05284-5>.

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Disclaimer

The views, interpretation, implications, conclusions and recommendations are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the investigators participating in the project nor the views or policy of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia.

This research highlight is part of a collection from the NHMS 2020:

- 1) Are you at risk of Hepatitis B?
- 2) Hepatitis B: A healthy carrier among us!
- 3) Stigma towards people living with HIV
- 4) Poor HIV knowledge among youth
- 5) **Ignoring TB-like symptoms in Malaysia**
- 6) Antibiotic resistance: How doctors and pharmacist could help?
- 7) Are Malaysians forgetting about Malaria?
- 8) Search destroy the facts
- 9) Dog ownership in Malaysia: Licensing & vaccination practices
- 10) Dog bite injuries: Intention vs practise of good health seeking behaviour

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