



REVIEW ARTICLE

STRENGTHENING NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT FOR TB PATIENTS: EXPANSION OF THE NI-KSHAY POSHAN YOJANA

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Received 19th August, 2024; Accepted 24th September, 2024; Published 30th October, 2024

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Citation: Mirza Adil Beig, Sayyad Mohammad Neman, Mohd Anas Quraishi, Abdul Rahman and Shahid ali warsi. 2024. "Strengthening Nutritional Support for TB Patients: Expansion of the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana.". *International Journal of Current Research*, 16, (10), 30292-30293.

INTRODUCTION

The Burden of TB in India: India bears a significant portion of the global TB burden. In 2021, an estimated 2.64 million cases were reported, accounting for approximately 25% of the world's TB cases (World Health Organization, 2022). Despite ongoing efforts to control TB, India continues to face considerable challenges in reducing TB incidence and mortality. The mortality rate, excluding those co-infected with HIV, was approximately 450,000 in 2021 (World Health Organization, 2022). This high burden underscores the urgent need for effective interventions to combat TB and improve patient outcomes.

The Interlink Between Under-Nutrition and TB: Under-nutrition and TB are intricately linked in a bidirectional relationship. Under-nutrition increases the risk of developing TB, while TB exacerbates under-nutrition due to increased tissue breakdown (Bhargava, Bhargava, & Tiwari, 2021). Addressing under-nutrition among TB patients has been shown to enhance treatment response, reduce mortality, and improve long-term treatment outcomes (Gupta, Singh, & Sharma, 2020). The enhanced nutritional assistance aims to provide adequate support and reduce TB-related morbidity and mortality.

Revised Nutritional Support Scheme: The revised scheme will provide the increased benefit in two equal installments of Rs 3,000 each. The first installment will be disbursed at the time of diagnosis as an advance, and the second installment will be provided after the completion of 84 days of treatment. For patients with treatment durations exceeding six months, the new benefit of Rs 1,000 per month will be generated.

This change will apply to all TB patients notified on or after 1st November 2024, while those notified before this date will receive subsequent eligible benefits at the new rate (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2024).

Energy Dense Nutrition Supplementation (EDNS): In addition to the monetary benefits, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has approved 'Energy Dense Nutrition Supplementation (EDNS)' for underweight TB patients (BMI less than 18.5 kg/m² at the time of diagnosis) during the first two months of treatment (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2024). This support will be provided in kind along with the supply of anti-TB drugs. This measure is crucial for ensuring that these vulnerable patients receive adequate nutritional support during their initial treatment phase.

Inclusion of Household Contacts: To address the vulnerability to TB among family members of TB patients, the inclusion of household contacts under the Ni-kshay Mitra initiative of the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA) has been approved. This initiative aims to prevent new infections and reduce TB-related deaths by extending support to household contacts (Press Information Bureau, 2024).

Conclusion and Call to Action: The enhancement in nutritional support is a commendable step by the government, reflecting its commitment to eradicating TB and improving the health and well-being of TB patients. It is imperative for all stakeholders, including state governments, healthcare providers, and the community, to support and effectively implement these measures to achieve desired outcomes.

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I urge readers and concerned authorities to spread awareness about this initiative and ensure that the benefits reach all

eligible TB patients. Collective efforts are essential in making significant strides towards a TB-free India.

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