

Abstract

One-third of the world population is infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (TB). Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) has been identified as the key strategy in tuberculosis control and prevention. Little research exists on DOTs seeking behaviour in Sri Lanka. The study objectives were to identify DOTS seeking behavior and the factors affecting it during the intensive phase (IP) among new smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis (PTB) patients to assess the duration of direct observation and describe patient and health service related factors. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. Study population was all new smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis patients registered at Colombo Chest Clinic, who had already finished the intensive phase (IP) and were currently on the continuation phase (CP). Data was collected using interviewer-administered questionnaires. SPSS and *MS Excel* were used to analyze data. Of the study sample, only 86.4% commenced treatment on the day of diagnosis. 43.3% were on daily DOTS and 65.9% swallowed drugs in front of DOT providers only on medication collection. Treatment interruption rate was 8%. 75.8% of the defaulters were males, who were belonging to low-income groups (75%), had an O/L or below education (86.4%) and were ≥ 35 years of age (78.6%). A significant association existed between “DOTS seeking behaviour” and age category ($p=0.027$), distance ($p=0.000$), time to visit ($p=0.000$) and selection ($p=0.000$) of DOT center and between “Treatment interruption” and time spent at ($p=0.000$) and type of DOT center ($p=0.013$). Tuberculosis is associated with low socio-economic status and education. A high proportion of patients smokes and/or consumes alcohol. A history of close contact and chronic ailments are common. Health workers must prioritize patient convenience and avoid marginalization to avoid treatment interruption.

Keywords: “DOTS Seeking behavior”, “Tuberculosis”, “Colombo”.