Activities 2021:

**Activity 2 arranged on 22nd January TB awareness among adolescent and young women**

Tuberculosis (TB) affects an estimated 10 million people globally every year, of which around 3.2 million are women. It has been demonstrated that women are at increased risk of progression to disease during their reproductive years. There are many socioeconomic and cultural factors such as stigma and discrimination, depression, poverty that led to barriers in accessing health care in women often leaving them in a more precarious social and economic position. Beside socioeconomic and cultural factors, undernutrition at the time of diagnosis of active TB is found to be a predictor of increased risk of death and TB relapse. Women are often responsible for producing and preparing food for the household, so their knowledge — or lack thereof — about nutrition can affect the health and nutritional status of the entire family. Tuberculosis is also an important cause of infertility, menstrual irregularity, pregnancy loss. Women and adolescent girls are usually worried about their reproductive life during and post TB treatment.

With this background we arranged an educational activity for MDR-TB adolescent and young women survivors and their mothers with an agenda to create awareness and empower them about reproductive health decision making, how to stay psychologically strong and what food needs to be consumed to remain healthy.

In all 25 participants attended the workshop. In the view of COVID-19 pandemic, thermal and symptom screening of each participant was done.

Dr. Nishi Suryavanshi, Director, Lakshya gave an overview and the purpose of the workshop.

Workshop was started with ice breaking activity where they were paired were given 5 minutes to talk among themselves to find who their partner is, what are her likes and dislikes. Each pair then asked to introduce her partner. This activity gave them opportunity to interact and become conformable with each other.

Participants then were asked to write their strengths and weaknesses on a paper. They were given option of not writing their names if they wish to do so. They were assured that everything spoken in the rom will remain confidential.

First session started at 11.00 am on the importance of Reproductive Health. Dr. Neetal Nevarekar, a Gynaecologist, gave valuable information on menstruation, menstruation cycle, warning signs of heavy bleeding and reproductive tract infection, irregular menses, hygiene during menstruation and vaginal hygiene in general, mother support, ovulation, PCOD, pregnancy care, family planning, spacing methods, beliefs related to menstruation and

reproductive health in general and in the context of TB, importance of social and community health as well as physical and psychological health.

Participants asked many questions about missing periods, what is optimal duration periods? how to cope with abdominal pain and irritation during menstruation? Do factors like stress, illness, weight can affect menstruation? when to seek doctors or counsellors help? when sexual activities can be started after completing TB treatment? etc.

Guest speakers, Dr. Sneha Karmani, Consultant Psychiatrist, Aditya Birla Memorial hospital and Manisha Wahi, Clinical Psychologist, Dr. DY Patil University, talked on Psychological health and dealing with stress. They conducted various activities to ask participants how mental health could be improved and is important to lead a healthy life. Psychiatrist explained under what condition they prescribe medicines to the patient and it is important to seek help instead of avoiding the mental illness by saying that it is just a tension and that will go away. They gave emphasis on Pre and Post- test counselling during TB diagnosis. They talked on anxiety, depression, importance of talking to your family and friends. They also emphasised on regular exercise that help to keep our mind healthy. They also talked about importance of social networking and peer support, spending time with people who give you positive energy. Participants liked this session and said that remembering and recalling the discussion in this session will motivate them.

Some of the participants shared their experiences of accepting TB disease, consuming 10-12 tablets per day, coping with injection pain, fighting with side effects, stigma, mental stress they faced when they are diagnosed with MDR-TB. Many of the participants got emotional while sharing their stories. They expressed a need of having Counselor and a Psychologist and TB programme. They also stressed providing family counselling (especially with in-laws) services at Government TB programme which help family in understating the disease and providing support in treatment period. Some of them also expressed of not having cleanliness at health facility especially washrooms. That makes admission stay challenging. They also expressed need of having support or peer groups. Few participants came forward saying they are ready to work as peer counsellor with the site whenever required.

Last but important lecture was on food and nutrition. Dr. Pooja Paur, Dietician at “Just for Hearts” Healthcare institute spoke on kind of diet needed to remain healthy. Why it is important to include protein rich, iron rich diet? What a wholesome meal should include daily. Importance of eating Calcium and B12 rich food. Why using iron made utensils and avoiding Aluminum and Plastic utensils is important? She also emphasized on eating fruits and vegetables’ and how it could help them with TB medications.

After lunch one MDR-TB survivor expressed her gratitude towards one of the site staff. She expressed her sincere thanks to staff who gave her psychological support during tough COVID-19 lockdown period. She said like it was great help when staff listen to her anxiety, stress etc that helped her in coming out of depression and suicidal thoughts.

Few mothers cried while sharing their experience. They said that such information will definitely help them in supporting their daughters during post-treatment period or otherwise.

Savita Kanade, Site Community and Outreach Coordinator, in the end conducted a small activity on Self- realization. The mirror that is our own reflection shows how important is self-worth! One participant said that this activity changed her outlook towards self and now she realised that how important it is to take care of self.

With great gesture and a token of love/ appreciation participants were gifted hand bags.

At the end of the workshop, site Counselors, Prasanna Sahoo and Meena Chivate gave vote of thanks.

At the end of the workshop few participants express their willingness to work as volunteer to educate and motivate MDR-TB girls and women, taking treatment from Aundh hospital. Some also volunteered to provide nutritional support to very poor patients.

Next day, many participants conveyed their thanks over the phone for organizing such a wonderful workshop!





