

COVID-19 pandemic derailed advances in TB treatment: Experts

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Image: Reuters File image: Clinical lead Doctor Al Story points to an x-ray showing a pair of lungs infected with TB (tuberculosis).

Tuberculosis (TB) experts say the COVID-19 pandemic derailed decades of work around TB testing and treatment.

More than 1500 delegates, including global health experts, policymakers and community leaders are expected to attend the [7th South African Tuberculosis \(TB\) Conference in Durban this week](#). Head of TB and HIV/AIDS Treatment Research at the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research (CAPRISA) Professor Kogie Naidoo, says while there were just over 100 000 deaths from COVID-19 from the start of the pandemic in the country, every week 1100 people die of TB in South Africa.

“COVID-19 pandemic has derailed about a decade of progress we’ve made towards tuberculosis (TB). The amount of people coming forward to seek a diagnosis has dropped to about 48%, so we are not finding people with TB, they’re walking around in the community. They are dying with TB without even accessing a diagnosis.,” says Naidoo.

The COVID-19 pandemic took away emphasis on TB

<https://youtu.be/ed-VTPHgsR0>

Alarming TB infection

South Africa is said to have alarming TB infection rates, coupled with the largest HIV/AIDS prevalence globally.

Authorities and scientists will take advantage of this conference to reinforce their commitment to the fight against TB.

Naidoo emphasises that TB impacts the most vulnerable communities and people living with HIV.

“South Africa is one of the top 30 countries for TB. Remember we’re number 1 for HIV. We hold about 17% of the global population of HIV, people living with HIV. And we have about 3.5% of people living with TB in SA. We are also known as being one of the countries with the highest rates of new TB infections. TB is here. It’s been here for a long time but it’s been largely ignored,” says Naidoo.

Deputy Minister of Health of South Africa Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo speak on TB ahead of the 7th South African TB Conference

<https://youtu.be/jBOPZwVMsCE>