

# Quality of TB care in South Africa's private sector

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## Background

- South Africa has one of highest burdens of TB and TB-HIV co-infection.
- Almost 30% of persons with active TB symptoms **first seek care in the private sector**
- We assessed **clinical management of TB and TB-HIV** among 95 consenting private general practitioners (GPs) in urban KwaZulu-Natal province



## Methods

- GP practices were assessed using Standardised Patient methodology (Kwan, 2019)
- Eight trained SPs delivered 1 of 3 case presentations as cash-paying patients
- GP practices were recorded on standardized forms after each unannounced interaction
- Sub-sample of 15 providers were subsequently interviewed to gather in-depth data about their practices and decision-making

### CASE 1: Suspected TB, HIV+

Cough + fever >2 weeks, sputum, loss of weight/ appetite, night sweats, not on ARTs

### CASE 2: Confirmed TB, HIV-

Above symptoms + positive GeneXpert report

### CASE 3: Suspected MDR-TB, HIV+

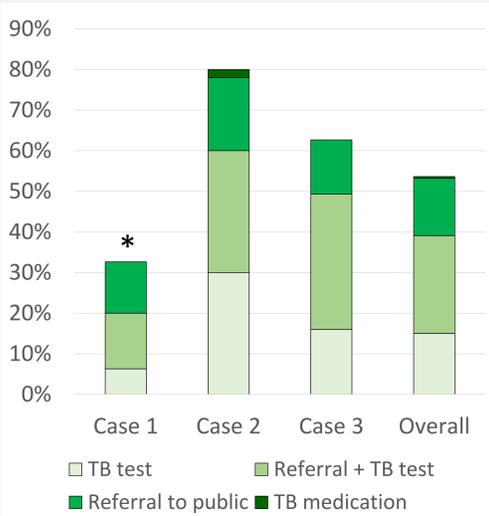
Above symptoms + previous TB dx and incomplete treatment, not on ARTs

### CORRECT CASE MANAGEMENT:

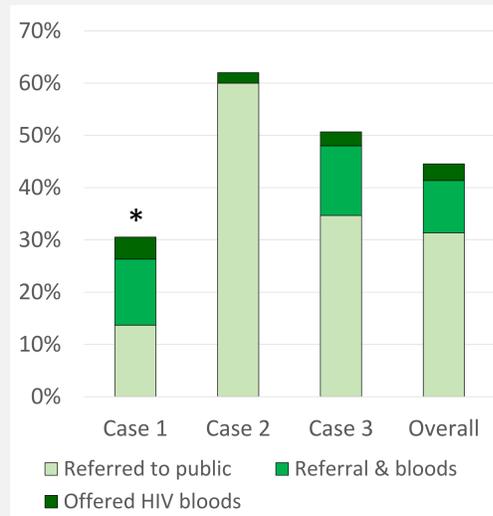
1. Offered or sent for any TB or HIV-related test
- OR**
2. Referral to public clinic or hospital for any reason

## Findings

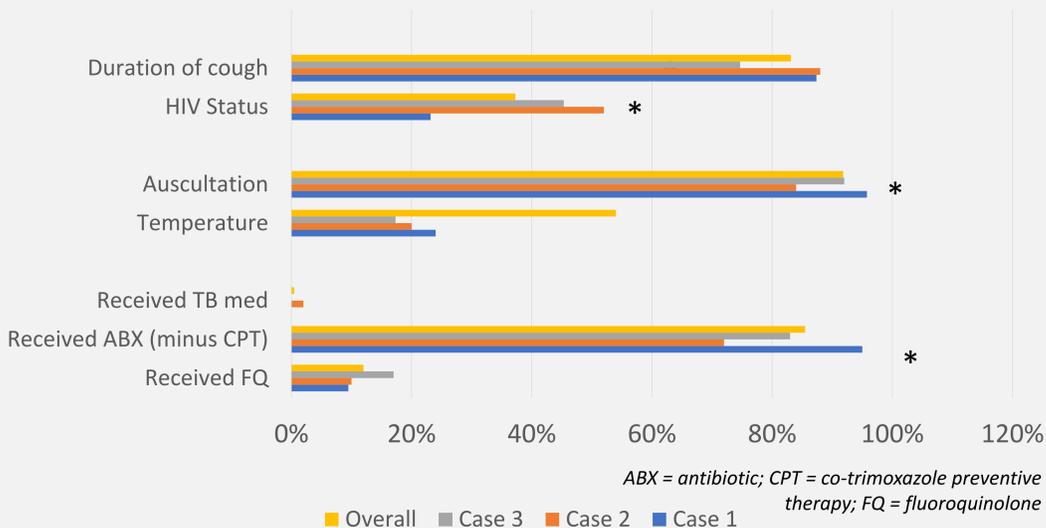
### Correct TB Management



### Correct HIV Management



Additional Management Outcomes, by Case



	SP1	SP2	SP3	Total
Interactions, n	95	50	75	220
Minutes spent with GP, mean (SD)	8.06 (5.4)	9.9 (6.8)	8.4 (6.1)	8.6 (6.0)
Medicines received, mean (SD)	4.31 (1.03)	3.04 (1.73)	3.84 (1.38)	3.86 (1.42)
Suspected/mentioned TB, n(%)	41 (43%)	41 (82%)	56 (75%)	138 (63%)

## Discussion

### Complexities Identified

- GPs weigh ability of low-income clients to pay out-of-pocket for tests against immediate empirical treatments
- GPs weigh patient attrition post-referral to public sector (for more sensitive GeneXpert) against retention in private sector (for less sensitive AFB test)
- Attrition or delay could occur from requiring patient to return with morning sputum sample

### Best Practices Identified

- GPs frequently ask basic TB & HIV questions and conduct essential examinations for cough presentation
- GPs explain trade offs underlying their testing decisions (see complexities, above)
- GPs prefer written vs. verbal referrals to increase patient retention and follow-up; some contact public clinics to ensure patients will be seen immediately and some accept returning patients at no-cost if encountering difficulty in the public sector

### Future Considerations

- Public system can potentially partner with the private sector to provide free GeneXpert testing to cash-paying patients who first present to private GPs

## Reference

Kwan A, Daniels B, Bergkvist S, Das V, Pai M, Das J. Use of standardised patients for healthcare quality research in low- and middle-income countries. *BMJ Global Health* 2019;4:e001669.

## Acknowledgements

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