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Singapore study suggests much shortened treatment period for TB patients

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TRUNCATE-TB trial is supported by the National Research Foundation, Singapore, under its Translational and Clinical Research Flagship Programme



Tuberculosis (TB) patients can look forward to a much-shortened treatment period, compared to the current six-month treatment regimen used globally, based around the antibiotic rifampicin, or rifampin as it is called in the United States.

In a ground-breaking study conducted across Asia and Uganda, Africa, the research team from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine), National University Hospital (NUH) and Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI), led by Professor Nicholas Paton from the Department of Medicine (NUS Medicine), found that a TB treatment strategy with an initial 8-week treatment period followed by retreatment of a small minority who were not cured, showed the same efficacy level as the standard 6-month treatment, but halved the average total time on treatment.

The TRUNCATE-TB trial was designed and coordinated from Singapore across a network of 18 sites in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, India and Uganda, Africa. This multi-site trial was supported by SCRI, which provided support in patient randomisation, data management, pharmacovigilance, and statistical analysis.

According to the researchers, this trial has the potential to transform the way people think about treating tuberculosis, and the way that clinical trials are done. With further work to refine the strategy, this new, more individualised approach to treatment will likely replace the standard six-month fixed duration approach for all.