PO - (8504) - EFFECT OF INCREASE USER FEES IN ACCESSING NEW TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES IN TANZANIA

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Background: While user fee in healthcare system has been associated with quality improvement, but substantial increase may have a detrimental effect. This paper reports on the effects of increasing user fees on utilization of TB diagnostic services in Tanzania.

Methods: We retrospectively analyze data on TB diagnostic services utilization between July 2013 and June 2015 in Mnazi Mmoja Zanzibar (MMZ), Musoma and Sumbawanga hospitals. In July 2014, user fees in Musoma was increased substantially from 2USD to 5USD; Sumbawanga increased in step-wise starting from 1USD to 2USD in July 2014 and from 2USD to 3USD in January 2015 and MMZ did not. We compared TB services utilization before and after introduction of user fees.

Results: Out of 7483 presumptive TB patients registered in all sites; 50.2% were males. Over half (3969) were registered before user fee was increased. Among 3969, 1579 (39.8%) were from Musoma, 922 (23.2%) from Sumbawanga and 1468 (37.0%) from MMZ. Of the 3514 patients registered after the introduction of user fees, 983 (28%), 952 (27.1%) and 1579 (44.9%) patients were from Musoma, Sumbawanga and MMZ respectively. Number of presumptive TB patients seeking TB diagnostic services at Musoma decreased significantly by 38% from 1579 to 983 after the increase of user fees (p=0.001). More females (817; 51.8% vs 458, 35.9%) attended Musoma before user fees was increased as compared to males whose attendance did not differ much (761; 48.2% vs 525; 53.4%); p=0.01. There was no significant decrease of patients at Sumbawanga and MMZ.

Conclusion: There was a significant decrease in the number of TB presumptive patients who accessed new TB diagnostic services in Musoma after substantial increase of user fees, the effect was more among women. Although user fees is beneficial, it should be increased in step wise not to affect service utilization.