

# Evidence Update

Summary of a Cochrane Review

Tuberculosis Series

**Does active case finding detect more TB cases among people in contact with TB patients than passive case finding?**

**Currently there is no evidence from randomised or quasi-randomised controlled trials to answer this question.**

Researchers from The Cochrane Collaboration conducted a review to investigate whether systematic screening of the direct contacts of tuberculosis (TB) patients increases early case detection. No randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or quasi-randomised trials were identified that have addressed this question.

## What is active and passive case finding and why is it important for public health?

TB is a serious infectious disease which can lead to disability and death. People with TB should be diagnosed and treated as early as possible to protect their own health and to prevent the infection of people around them.

### What is passive case finding?

Health workers diagnose TB in people who present themselves to a healthcare facility.

### What is active case finding?

Health workers actively go out into the community to screen people who are at high risk of TB infection. These include people who have been in close or casual contact with TB patients (contact tracing), people living with HIV and people who live in TB endemic communities and therefore have an increased risk of infection.

## Is the research reliable?

The review was generally well conducted and at a low risk of bias. The inclusion criteria were explicit and appropriate for the review question. A comprehensive search strategy was used to identify potentially relevant studies. This included searching electronic databases, grey literature, reference screening, searching by hand and reaching out to experts in the field. It is unlikely that relevant studies were missed as no restrictions based on year, language, or format of publication were applied. No relevant studies were identified and so the conclusions that further research is required were appropriate.

## What does the research say?

No studies met the inclusion criteria for this review. The authors found one RCT that evaluated the effect of active case finding in contacts of people with TB. This could not be included as the trial intervention also included screening and treatment of latent TB infection in contacts, therefore the separate effect of active case finding could not be estimated.

## More information

### This summary is based on the following systematic review:

Fox GJ, Dobler CC, Marks GB. Active case finding in contacts of people with tuberculosis. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2011, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD008477. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD008477.pub2.

### What is a systematic review?

A systematic review seeks to answer a well formulated and specific question by identifying, critically appraising, and summarising the results of all relevant trials, published and unpublished, according to pre-stated and transparent methods.

### What is the Cochrane Collaboration?

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international network of more than 28,000 people from over 100 countries. The collaboration is one of the biggest producers of systematic reviews on the effects of healthcare interventions, and Cochrane Systematic Reviews are recognized internationally as the benchmark for high quality information. The *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* is available from [www.thecochranelibrary.com](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com) and free for eligible countries.

