



## DELAY IN THE DETECTION AND DIAGNOSIS OF PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC - A REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

MUNKO T.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Special Hospital for Pulmonary Diseases, Zagreb, Croatia  
*Department of Pulmonology*

### Objective:

Delays in recognizing, diagnosing, and treating tuberculosis (TB) are an obstacle to disease control and may be responsible for the continued presence of infection among general population. The basic principle of tuberculosis surveillance and control in addition to vaccination, is to reduce the transmission of infection in the general population by early detection and treatment. Socioeconomic factors and risk factors as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse affect the incidence of TB and may contribute to delays in detecting and initiating treatment. Due to the continuous decline in the TB incidence in Croatia, tuberculosis it is no longer a priority public health problem, and with medication and improvement of living standards, expectations are that the incidence should be lower. The duration of the Covid-19 infection pandemic shows some impact on the incidence of TB. Access diagnostic tests have declined, partly due to limited human and material resources, but also due to social stigma, coughing or general ill health, "forcing" TB patients to hide their disease but also delay access to health care. During this time, the disease progresses, and may lead to an increase in new cases of tuberculosis. The aim of this study is to identify and define risk factors for delays in recognizing the disease by the patient and the health care system, and their impact on the incidence



of TB in the Croatian population. The study will be conducted in Croatian health care institutions where patients with pulmonary TB with positive cultures and bronchoalveolar lavage for M. tuberculosis, aged 18 and above, of both sexes divided into two groups: with risky behaviors and without them are treated. Data will be collected from the medical records and standardized forms for reporting. Assessing risk factors contributes to earlier detection, prevention of treatment delays, and finding solutions in implementing appropriate measures leads to a further reduction in the incidence of TB in the population.

**Keywords:** Croatia; Covid -19; incidence; risk factors; tuberculosis; health care