Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

• Discuss the ethical obligations health care workers have to care for patients at risk of or those with TB
• Describe the rights of health care workers who care for patients at risk of or those with TB

International Standards for TB Care

Emphasises responsibility of providers:

• Be aware of individual and population risk factors
• Reduce diagnostic delay
Ethical principles and health care worker obligations to care for TB patients

- Ethical obligation to provide care to patients
- Limits to degree of risk that can be reasonably expected
- May have multiple obligations that must be balanced against their job-related duties

- Should not be expected to assume risks:
  - That can be avoided by the adoption of basic infection control measures
  - When there is no reasonable possibility of benefit for those for whom they are providing care
- Obligations must also consider reciprocal obligations of governments and health care facilities to provide minimum standards of safety

Risks vs. responsibilities

Legitimate expectation for health care worker to care for patients with TB when provided with:
- Reasonable training
- Supplies
- Equipment
- Infrastructure
- Support
- Access to proven methods of care and treatment

Governments have an obligation to ensure that support is provided
Dealing with greater risks

- Expectations may not be appropriate if health care workers’ risk of contracting TB infection high
- Unless working conditions adequately protect from TB exposure
- If at heightened risk of danger:
  - Attempt to ensure that patients are not abandoned
  - Transfer patient responsibilities to other providers

Let’s discuss…

What potential gaps and challenges could prevent HCWs from being protected when managing people at risk of or those with TB?

- Divide into groups, based on instructions
- Move to the place designated for your group
- Nominate a spokesperson, note-taker and timekeeper for the group
- Read through the question and information provided in the section titled ‘Setting the Scene’ in the Health Care Worker Rights and Obligations: Activity 4 Delegate Hand-out
- Discuss the question in your small group
- Prepare a group response in preparation for the plenary discussion

Reciprocal obligations to health care workers

- Provide training, equipment, and protection
- Give skills and information necessary to assess risks so that proper precautions may be taken
- Provide access to TB diagnosis, including TB screening, for those living with HIV
- Identify and treat those with active TB, using the best proven treatment
Reciprocal obligations to health care workers (continued)

- Clearly articulate:
  - Expectations about the working conditions
  - Specific roles they are expected to assume
  - Risks inherent in those situations
- Appropriately compensate for services:
  - Danger pay and insurance for themselves and their families
  - Disability pay for those who become infected

Health care worker obligations when reciprocal obligations are unfulfilled

- Not unethical to decide not to work
- System, not the individual worker, that is ethically responsible
- Appeal to those in a position to make changes
- Governments and healthcare systems have an obligation to ensure that care can be provided safely