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DRUG RESISTANCE IN TUBERCULOSIS: CHALLENGES AND MANAGEMENT

Ashwin Dhangar*[1], Kamlesh Mistry[2], Tanya Sharma[3], Dhananjay Mistry[4], Noorul Huda[5]

[1]Research Scholar, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

[2]Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

[4]Lecturer, Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

[5]Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

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***Corresponding Author: Ashwin Dhangar**

Research Scholar, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh 312901, Rajasthan, India.

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ABSTRACT:

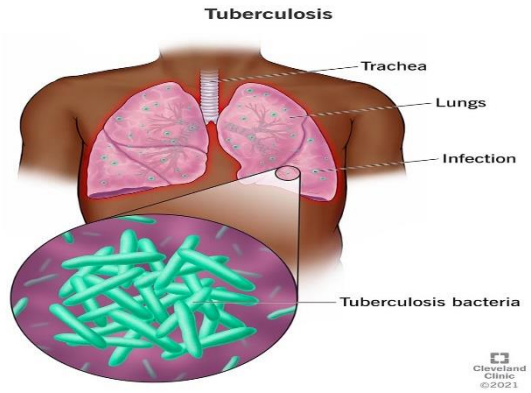
Tuberculosis Drug Resistance: Problems and Treatment. Mycobacterium tuberculosis is the cause of tuberculosis (TB) that is one of the most dangerous infectious diseases among the global population. Although there are working anti-tubercular medications, the advent and transmission of a drug-resistant tuberculosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) have seriously impacted TB control initiatives. TB drug resistance occurs when the causative agent acquires resistance to one or more anti-TB drug, and thus the normal course of treatment is rendered ineffective. This has made the management of diseases more difficult, long treatment process, high cost of health and poor patient outcomes. The TB which is drug resistant is broadly classified into a number of types depending on the pattern of resistance. Mono-resistant TB is associated with resistance to one first-line drug, poly-resistant TB is associated with resistance to more than one first-line drug, but not both isoniazid and

rifampicin. The most severe form of TB is multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), which is characterized by resistance to the most effective anti-TB medications, which are isoniazid and rifampicin. Types of resistance are dangerous to the treatment process and involve complicated approaches to treatment. Drug resistance in TB occurs majorly because of biological, clinical as well as programmatic factors. On the biological level, spontaneous loss or gain of genetic mutation on Mycobacterium tuberculosis causes drug targets to change, activate drugs less or to have more efflux. Clinically, inappropriate or unfinished treatment regimes like the use of wrong combinations of drugs, wrong dosing and untimely termination of treatment also play significant roles in development of resistance. The problem is aggravated by poor adherence of patients who are influenced by prolonged treatment periods and side effects of the drugs. Also, the spread of already resistant strains of the disease by infected people makes a significant contribution to the spread of DR-TB. Poor healthcare systems, absence of diagnostic centers, and irregularity in the supply of drugs are also a contributing factor to the increased burden of resistance.

In order to effectively manage and control the disease, diagnosis of drug-resistant TB must be carried out. Though dependable, conventional type of testing, such as culture and drug susceptibility testing (DST) is time consuming and might delay the commencement of treatment. The latest developments in molecular diagnostic methods, such as nucleic acid amplification assays such as GeneXpert and line probe assays, have completely transformed TB diagnosis allowing quick detection of drug resistance, especially the rifampicin resistance. Timely and proper diagnosis plays a vital role in the prevention of the further spread and the subsequent treatment. TB which is resistant to drugs is difficult to manage. The duration of treatment regimens is longer (10-24 months), second-line drugs are used, which are less effective, more toxic, and costly as compared to the first-line medications. Patients who are being treated with DR-TB often have serious side effects, such as ototoxicity, nephrotoxicity, and psychological disturbances, that may lead to non-adherence. Newer medications like bedaquiline and delamanid have been introduced in the recent past and have led to an improvement in the treatment outcomes, giving hope to better treatment of resistant cases.

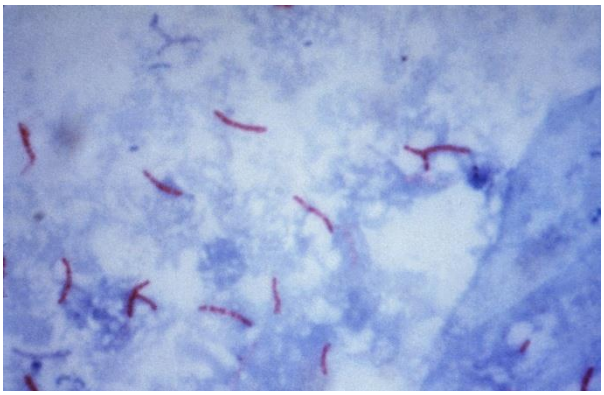
KEYWORDS: Tuberculosis (TB), Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB), Multidrug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB), Extensively Drug-Resistant TB (XDR-TB), Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Anti-Tubercular Drugs, Isoniazid Resistance, Rifampicin Resistance, Drug

Susceptibility Testing (DST), GeneXpert (CBNAAT), Line Probe Assay (LPA), Treatment Adherence, DOTS Strategy, Second-Line Drugs, Bedaquiline.



1.0 INTRODUCTION: DRUG RESISTANCE IN TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis (TB) is a long term infectious disease that is caused by bacteria Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It can attack either the lungs which is termed as pulmonary tuberculosis or it can invade other body parts like the lymph nodes, bones, the brain and kidneys which is termed extrapulmonary tuberculosis. Pneumonia tuberculosis is a disease which is transmitted via air when an infected person sneezes, talks or coughs. TB is a significant health issue that is very preventable and curable; however, it is one of the primary health issues in all parts of the world especially in the developing states where the healthcare resources are scarce.



Drug-resistant strains of Mycobacterium tuberculosis have greatly threatened the control of tuberculosis. Drug resistance is the development of the ability to live and reproduce even in the case of anti-tubercular drugs which are expected to kill them or at least prevent their multiplication. This is now one of the greatest impediments to successful management and eradication of TB. Drug-resistant tuberculosis does not only extend the illness but also

elevates the chances of spreading the disease, death, and economic costs to patients and health facilities.

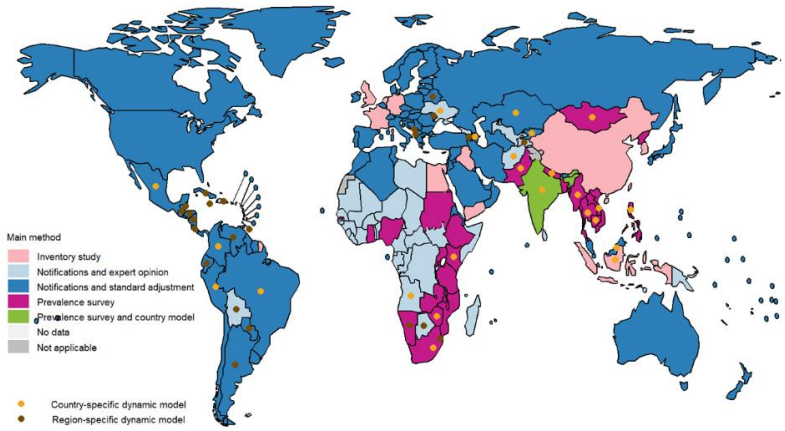
TB is normally managed successfully using a combination of first-line anti-tubercular medications which include isoniazid, rifampicin, ethambutol and pyrazinamide. These medications are used during a span of six months or above to prevent total elimination of the bacteria. But when these drugs are used inappropriately they may result into drug resistance. Incomplete treatment, inconsistent drug consumption, wrong dosage, and substandard medications are some of the factors that have played a significant role in the development of resistant strains. In the event of improper treatment, certain bacteria might escape and undergo further mutations which render them resistant to the drugs that are administered.

Tuberculosis is classified into drug-resistant based on the level of resistance against anti-TB drugs. The most alarming versions are multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) which is resistant to at least isoniazid and rifampicin, and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) that also displays resistance against second-line drugs. Such TB forms are far harder to treat and demand more complex and tougher treatment regimens, and are oftentimes more toxic. The cure rates of drug-resistant TB are much lower than those of drug-sensitive TB, and thus it is a serious health concern in the entire world.

Development of drug-resistant TB is not just a biological condition but also affected by social, economic and health care-related issues. In most of the areas, the ignorance on the disease, stigma on TB as well as inaccessibility to healthcare services are some of the factors that deny patients access to timely diagnosis and cure. Moreover, poor healthcare infrastructure, poor monitoring processes, and inadequate provisions of good quality drugs are other factors that aggravate the situation. In others, persons can get infected with drug-resistant strains per se, which then spread to communities and cause primary drug resistance.

Genetic mutations are the major causes of drug resistance in Mycobacterium tuberculosis in a microbiological perspective. In contrast to other bacteria, TB is not normally resistant to plasmids or horizontal gene transfer. Rather, the drug targets or metabolic pathways change spontaneously due to mutations in certain genes making the drugs ineffective. As an example, mutation in rpoB gene has been linked to rifampicin resistance whereas mutation on the rpoB and katG genes or inhA promoter area has been linked to isoniazid resistance. These genetic alterations enable the bacteria to live even after administering drugs and treatment becomes even harder.

2.0 Literature Review:



The increasing burden of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) has become the focus of attention of researchers and other public health organizations worldwide. Given the case over the years, there has been a number of studies conducted in the epidemiology, causes, mechanisms, diagnosis, and management of drug-resistant TB. The literature review can offer the description of the most important results of the earlier research, which would mention the most important challenges and innovations in this field.

Primary research on tuberculosis was conducted on the efficacy of the first-line anti-tubercular drugs e.g. isoniazid and rifampicin. These medicines were deemed to be very effective in combination therapy. Nevertheless, studies that were undertaken in the late 20 th century started reporting cases of treatment failure owing to the development of resistant strains of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. These discoveries triggered a new dilemma in the process of controlling TB.

Later research further stressed that drug resistance is one of the issues that are highly man-made, and they happen because of inappropriate treatment methods. Researchers found out that untreated or untreated populations of the bacterial resistant organisms can survive because of irregular or incomplete treatment. It has always been observed that those patients who fail to take the required duration of therapy have a much greater chance of acquiring multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB). Moreover, the improper use of antibiotics, wrong prescriptions, and substandard drugs have also been largely cited as the factors.

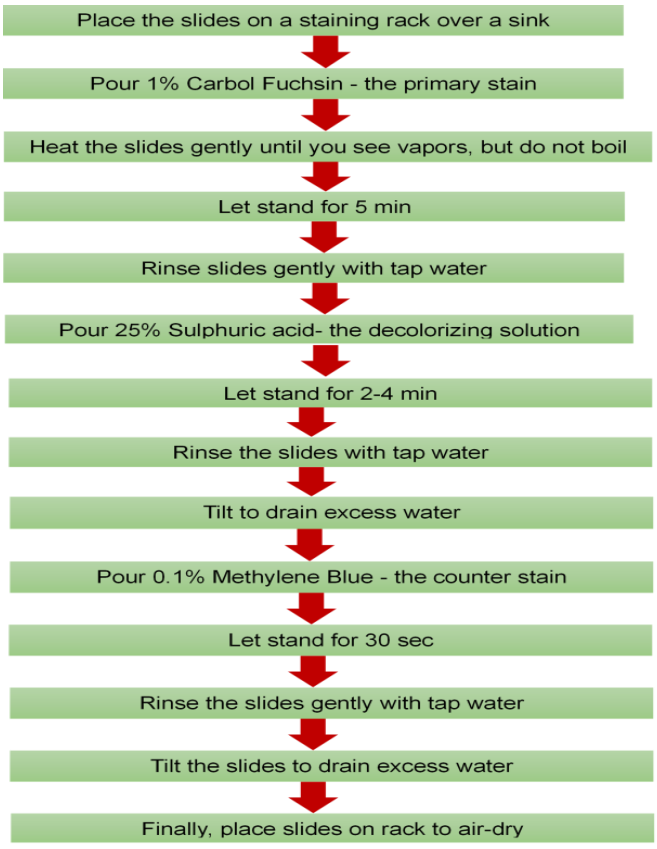
Epidemiological studies have found that drug-resistant TB is a worldwide issue with the majority of the world being more exposed to this disorder in low- and middle-income countries. Countries that have ineffective healthcare systems and a low number of access to diagnostic testing centers are more likely to have a high level of MDR-TB and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB), according to different reports. Research has also indicated that overcrowding, poverty, malnutrition, and HIV co-infection are the major factors that make people more vulnerable to TB infection and develop resistance to drugs.

Some researchers have researched on the genetic cause of the drug resistance in Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It has been determined that resistance comes as a result of spontaneous mutations of certain genes. By way of example, rifampicin resistance is caused by mutations of the rpoB gene, whereas isoniazid resistance is caused by mutations of katG and inhA genes. TB does not normally obtain resistance due to horizontal gene transfer in the way that other bacteria do and instead resistance acquisition relies on mutation as an important field of investigation. Such molecular understandings have played a significant role in the development of tools of rapid diagnosis.

The development of new diagnostic methods has become one of the primary priorities of the recent literature. Conventional approaches like culture and drug susceptibility testing (DST) though valid, are time consuming and can be a hindrance to making treatment decisions. As a

solution to this, molecular diagnostic procedures have been invented. Research comparing GeneXpert system has shown that it is able to identify TB and rifampicin resistance in a few hours. On the same note, line probe assays (LPA) have also been reported to be useful in the determination of resistance to first- and second-line drugs. The innovations have greatly enhanced early diagnosis and treatment of drug resistant TB.

The difficulty in treating the drug-resistant TB is also pointed out in the literatures. The studies also show that MDR-TB treatment has longer durations and involves second line drugs, which are not as effective and even toxic. Research has indicated that most patients subject to treatment often have their hearing impaired, kidney damaged, and suffer psychiatric imbalances. All these side effects lead to inadequate treatment adherence which, again, deteriorates the outcomes and predisposes to additional resistance.



3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The resistance study in tuberculosis is founded on the well-established microbiological, molecular, and clinical methods. The techniques play a crucial role in identifying Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the patterns of resistance, and the ways of proper treatment. This section provides a theoretical framework of the materials and methods that are typically applied at the investigation and diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB).

The clinical specimen of the patient is the most important material to be used in the diagnosis of tuberculosis. Sputum is the most prevalent sample in the instance of pulmonary tuberculosis because of the existence of respiratory secretions in the sputum where the bacteria are located. Other specimens including lymph node aspirates, pleural or cerebral spinal or tissue biopsies can be used in the extrapulmonary tuberculosis. The collection, handling, and transportation of such samples are very important to make diagnostic results accurate and reliable.

One of the oldest and most commonly used techniques of identification of Mycobacterium tuberculosis is microscopic examination. The principle of microscopy is founded on the recognition of the acid-fast bacilli because of the special structure of the bacterial cell wall, which includes mycolic acids. These lipids render the bacteria to be resistant to the decolorization with the acid-alcohol, and as such, the bacteria are able to maintain certain stains. Even though microscopy is a quick and low cost technique, it fails to give information on drug resistance as well as lacks sensitivity particularly in individuals with low bacterial loads.

The gold standard in confirming the infection of tuberculosis and drug resistance is viewed to be the use of culture methods. Such procedures include the cultivation of Mycobacterium tuberculosis on special media under a controlled laboratory setting. The idea of culture methods is to create the condition of slowing down the growth of the bacteria, so that they could be detected and further examined. Drug susceptibility testing (DST), or knowing whether the bacteria can survive on the presence of anti-tubercular drugs, is also permissible by culture-based methods. The low rate of growth of Mycobacterium tuberculosis however

renders this method time consuming, results can take several weeks before results can be obtained.

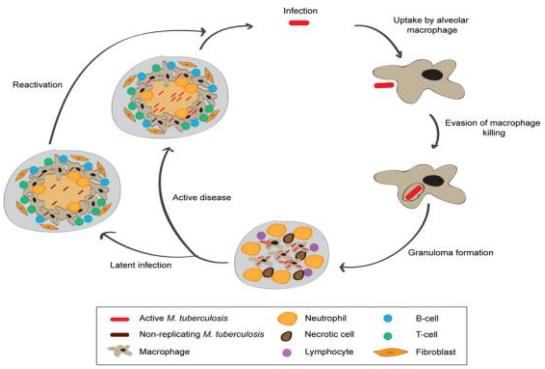
Molecular diagnosis of the development of drug resistance is premised on the presence of mutations of certain genes of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. As an example, resistance to rifampicin is usually linked with rpoB gene mutations whereas resistance to isoniazid is usually linked to katG gene mutation or inhA promoter region mutation. This knowledge of such genetic processes has played a key role in diagnostic systems and individualized treatment.

Along with the laboratory-based techniques, clinical testing also contributes significantly to the detection of the possible cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis. Patients who fail to respond to conventional therapy, relapse, or those who have been previously treated to TB are said to be more susceptible to drug resistance. These clinical signs enable medical workers to make the right diagnostic tests and the methods of treatment.

In the studies concerning drug-resistant tuberculosis, the data collection is often performed through the investigation of laboratory findings, patient histories, and treatment outcomes. The data are vari-interpreted in terms of how drug resistance can be common, patterns, and determinants. The information is critical in developing effective control strategies and enhancing management of the patients.

Although there are sophisticated diagnostic procedures, there are a number of limitations. The traditional approaches are slow whereas the molecular techniques might fail to detect all forms of resistance, notably those that are caused by rare or unknown mutations. Moreover, advanced diagnostic tools are expensive and highly technical in nature and thus their availability in resource-constrained environments is restricted. These complications point to the necessity of further research and development of more efficient, affordable and accessible methods of diagnosis.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Drug resistance in the case of tuberculosis has shown that much information is available in terms of the prevalence, causes, patterns, and effects of the resistant strains of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. With the understanding of the theory of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) and previous knowledge, it becomes obvious that the problem of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) has become a significant health issue in the world and in both developed and developing nations. The findings of different researches and observations suggest that the phenomenon of development of drug resistance is strictly related to the practice of treatment, the healthcare system, and socio-economic issues.

Results discussion shows that drug resistance is one of the issues that can be avoided. Lack of compliance to treatment regimens is amongst the most crucial contributing factors to the occurrence of resistance. Patients are most likely to be demoralized during therapy due to long treatment periods, drug side effects, ignorance and stigma. Consequently, this results in selective populations of resistant bacteria that occur as a result of partially treated infections.

The other significant finding is that healthcare systems play a crucial role in determining the appearance and the treatment of drug-resistant TB. In areas where healthcare facilities are scarce, poor diagnostic facilities and inconsistent supply of drugs are some of the factors that lead to late diagnoses and improper treatment.

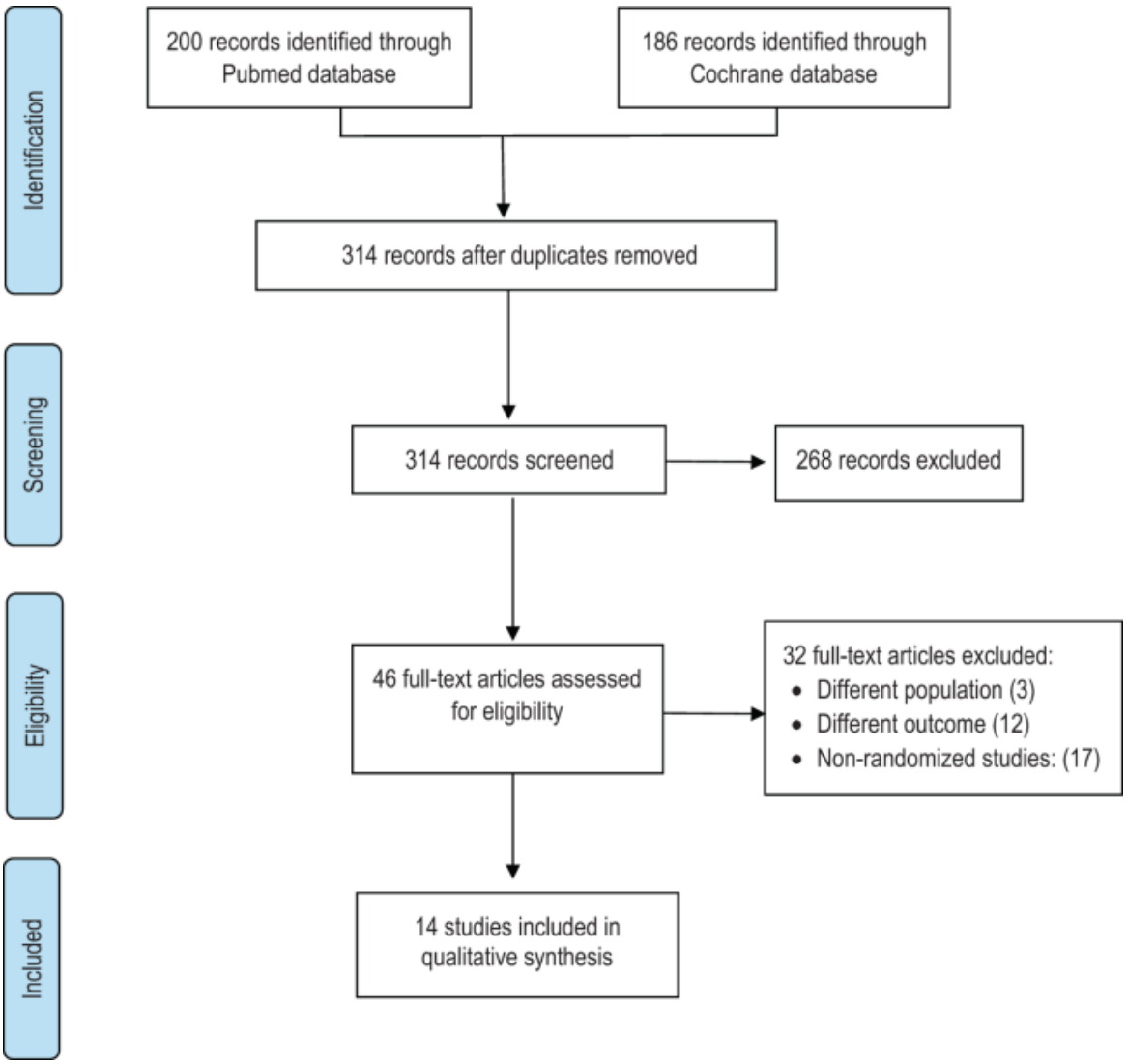
The findings also show that development of diagnostic technology has played a key role in ensuring that drug-resistant tuberculosis is detected. Nucleic acid amplification tests are molecular techniques that have enabled the detection of resistance in a short time. Early diagnosis enables the initiation of the proper treatment on time and minimizes the risk of spreading the disease and enhancing the recovery of patients. The access and affordability of such technologies are however a challenge in most of the low-income environments.

Microbiologically, the discussion can be seen to indicate that genetic mutations are the major causes of drug resistance in Mycobacterium tuberculosis. These mutations destabilize or distort the structure or function of the drug targets rendering the drugs useless. As opposed to other bacteria, TB does not depend greatly on horizontal gene transfer to acquire resistance making mutation-driven resistance an important area of research. The knowledge of these mechanisms has led to the creation of the specific diagnostic tools and newer curative agents.

The results also indicate the difficulties of treating drug-resistant TB. Second-line medications applied in the treatment of MDR-TB as well as XDR-TB are less effective, toxic, and need more time to treat. The side effects that patients have been experiencing include hearing impairment, kidney malfunction and mental disorders. Such side effects affect the

treatment adherence and general results in a negative way. Long period of treatment also adds up to the financial cost of the treatment on the patient and health system.

The recent advances in the anti-TB drugs research have demonstrated promising results in enhancing treatment outcomes. There are new medications like bedaquiline and delamanid which have been introduced to improve the efficacy of therapy regimes. In certain instances, the effectiveness of these drugs has proven to be effective and shortening the period of treatment. Nonetheless, they are expensive and limited in number which limits their usage especially in resource constraint environments.



5.0 Phytochemical / Concept-Based Tests in Drug Resistance of Tuberculosis

Testing in drug-resistant tuberculosis is an unrelated concept of phytochemical analysis because tuberculosis is not a plant-based study, but a bacterial disease. Rather, the first section is devoted to concept-based tests and theories that are employed to learn about drug

resistance in Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The tests are necessary to determine the resistance patterns, assess drug efficiency, and direct the treatment plans.

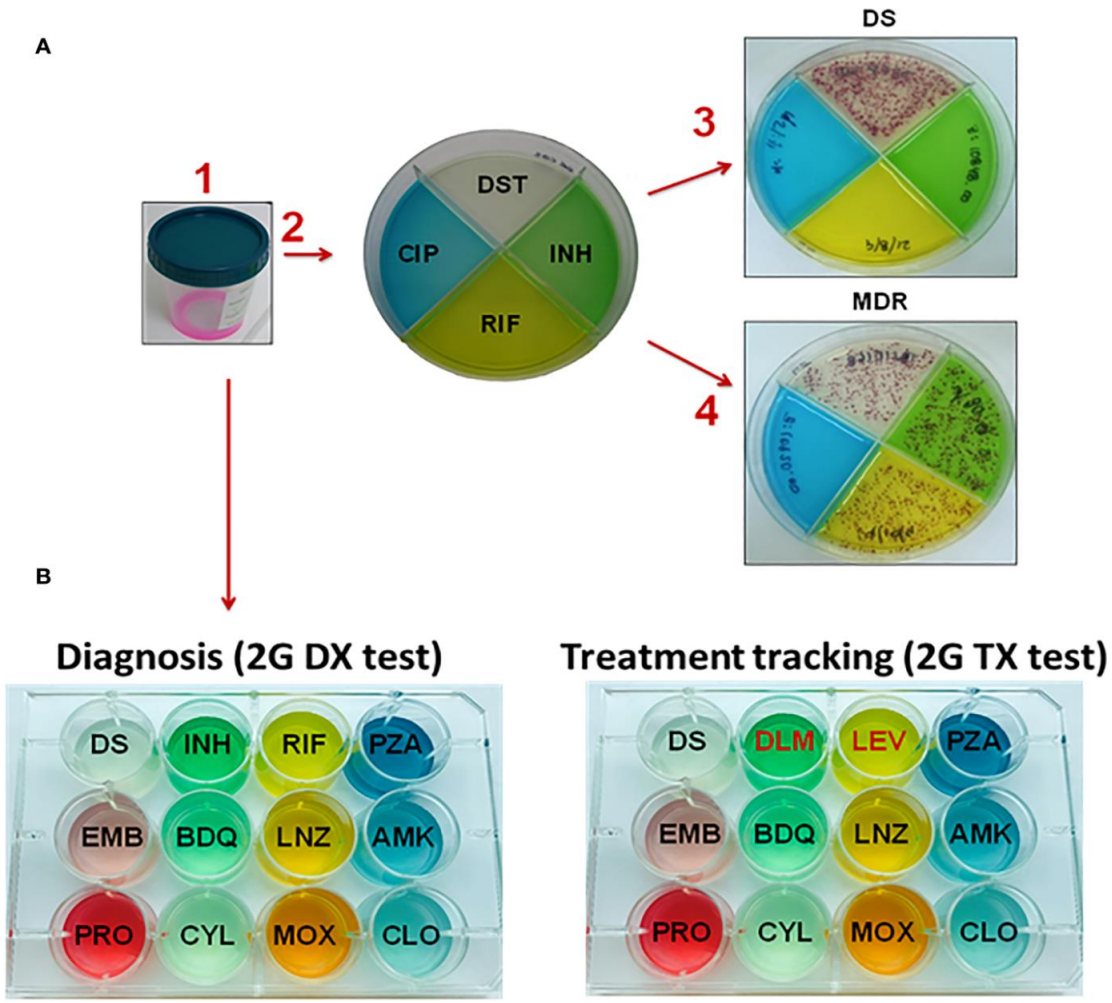
The drug susceptibility testing (DST) concept is one of the most significant theoretical tests in the field of tuberculosis. This is a test which relies on the principle of testing the ability of Mycobacterium tuberculosis to grow under the influence of anti-tubercular drugs. In case the bacteria keep growing even after being exposed to a drug, this means it is resistant. On the other hand, the growth of bacteria is also suppressed implying sensitivity. This notion is the foundation of the choice of proper treatment regimens and the avoidance of the use of ineffective drugs.

One more important one is the minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC). MIC is the minimum level of concentration of a drug that prevents the visible growth of bacteria. In the case of tuberculosis, the identification of MIC aids in knowing the extent of resistance shown by the bacterial strain. An increase in MIC implies resistance and so, high doses or other medications might be needed to treat. The idea is extensively applied in studies and clinical decision-making.

The resistance concept that is based on mutation is the basis of all the knowledge on drug resistance in tuberculosis. In contrast to most other bacteria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis acquires resistance to most of the cases by spontaneous genetic mutations instead of by a horizontal gene transfer. These mutations take place in particular genes which mediate with drugs. As an example, rifampicin resistance is coupled with mutations in the rpoB gene and isoniazid resistance is coupled with mutation in the katG gene or inhA promoter region. Such genetic modifications modify the objects of action of drugs rendering them useless.

Another concept to consider in tuberculosis is the cross-resistance. Cross-resistance is a phenomenon that takes place when a drug is resistant to a given drug whose mechanism of action is similar. As an example, a resistance against a single fluoroquinolone can lead to the decreased efficacy of other drugs, which belong to the same category. The concept is essential in the development of the treatment regimens since it aids in preventing the administration of drugs that are not effective because of common resistance mechanisms.

The other theoretical concept is the concept of bacterial population dynamics. Any TB case has a combination of bacterial populations which are both drug sensitive and drug-resistant. The sensitive bacteria are killed when treatment is administered and the resistant bacteria might survive to proliferate. This form of selective pressure results in the preeminence of resistant strains. This notion clarifies that drug resistance is developed when an incomplete or inadequate treatment is applied.



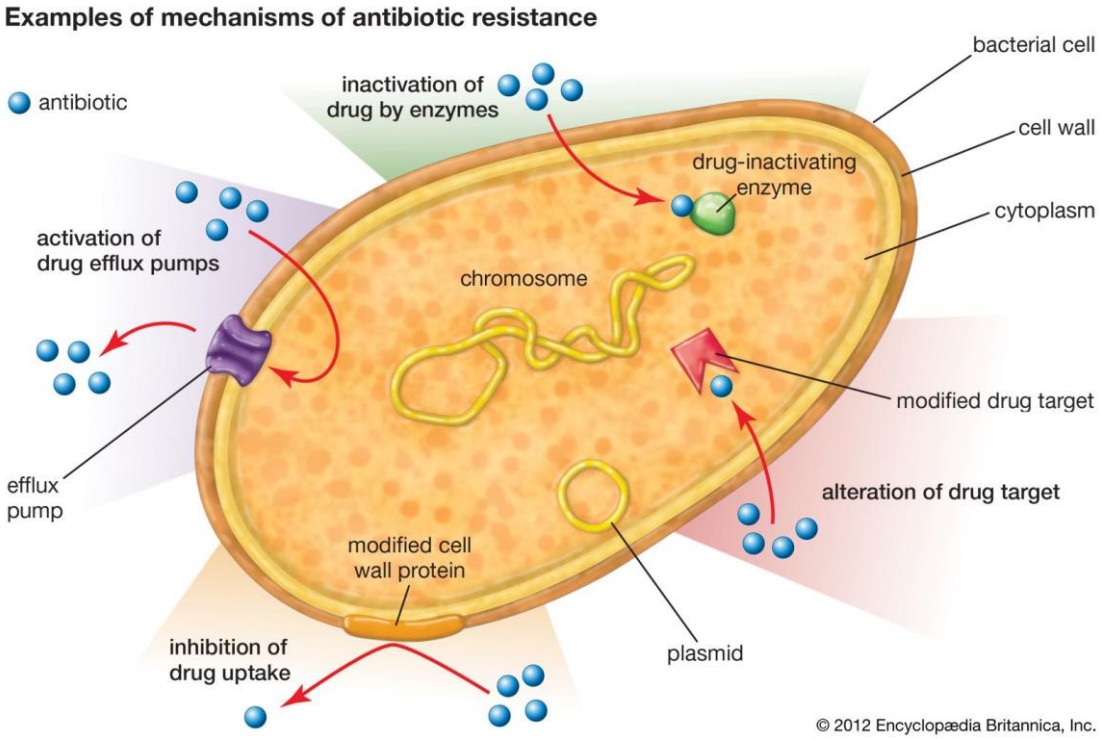
The pharmacodynamic (PK/PD) concept is also of great importance in the conceptualization of drug resistance. Pharmacokinetics involves the absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion of the drug in the body whereas pharmacodynamics is the effect of the drug to the bacteria. Failure to maintain drug concentrations at optimum levels can result in suboptimal treatment and resistance. Hence, it is important to take the right dosage and follow the treatment regimes.

Another conceptual principle that is crucial in TB management is the combination therapy principle. Tuberculosis treatment is always combined with a number of drugs. This will minimize resistance chances as it is rare that the bacteria will develop resistance to all drugs in the regimen at the same time.

Drug resistance is inextricably connected with the treatment adherence concept. It is necessary that patients should take medications routinely and finish a round of treatment. Unregular consumption or premature withdrawal of treatment gives some bacteria an opportunity to survive and thereby heightening the chances of resistance. It is this concept

that lays the foundation to certain strategies like the direct observed treatment where the healthcare professionals oversee patients to ensure compliance.

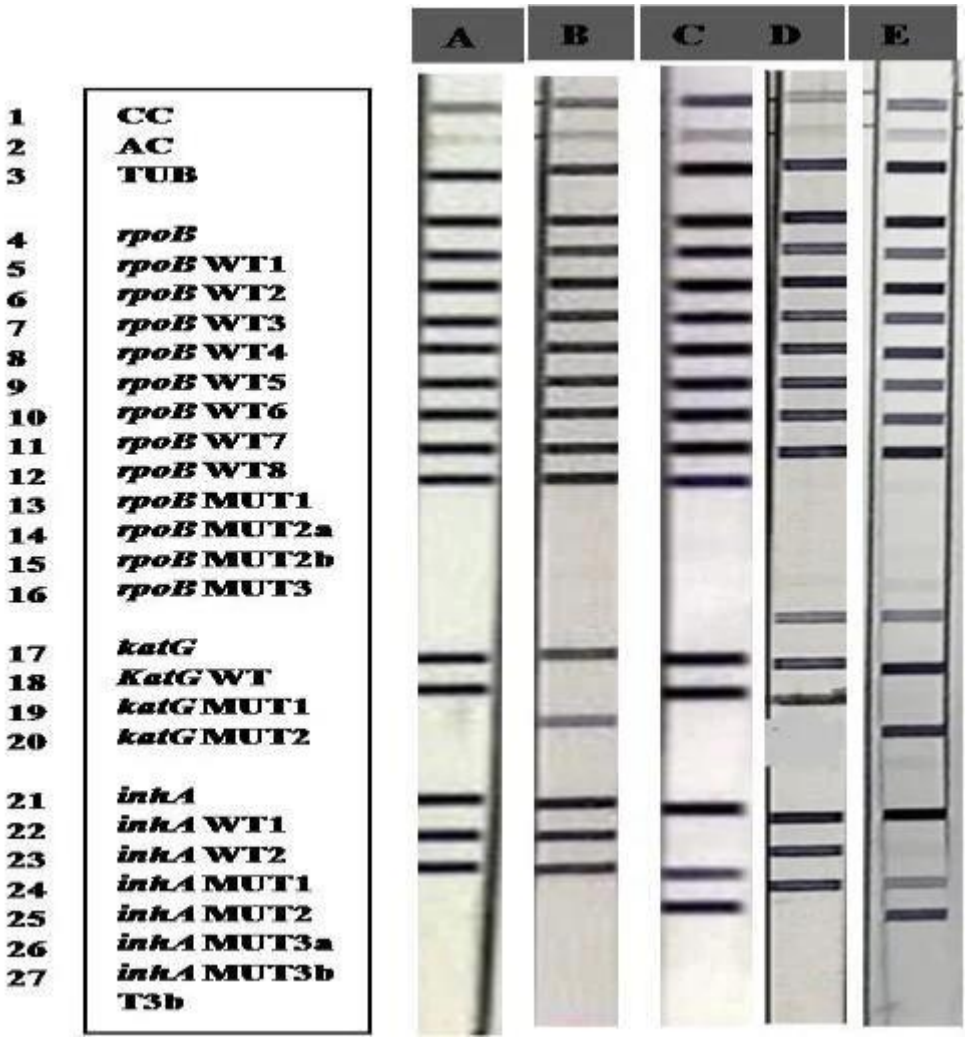
The other principle is the diagnostic accuracy principle. TB is a drug-resistant infection that requires accurate and early diagnosis to be treated. Late or wrong diagnosis can result in wrong treatment that can increase resistance. The current diagnostic methods of identifying genetic mutation or bacterial growth patterns are used to enhance resistance detection.



6. Diagnosis of Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB)

The process of diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) is the important step in the process of controlling the disease spread and providing successful treatment. It entails detecting Mycobacterium tuberculosis in the clinical samples and whether the bacteria are susceptible to anti-tubercular medications or not. Timely and correct diagnosis assists in the choice of suitable treatment plans and minimizes the threat of spreading.

DR-TB diagnosis requires a combination of clinical, microbiological and sophisticated molecular diagnostic methods. Suspected patients of drug-resistant TB will usually involve individuals who have not responded to conventional therapy, those who have received prior therapy of TB, or those who were in contact with individuals who have known cases of drug-resistant TB.



Microscopic examination is one of the simplest ways of TB diagnosis. This is a procedure, which entails the staining of sputum samples and examination using a microscope in order to identify acid-fast bacilli. This principle is founded on the characteristic cell wall of Mycobacterium tuberculosis that is resistant to the removal of certain stains despite being treated with acid-alcohol. Though microscopy is fast and cost effective, it is unable to detect drug resistance and in some instances, it does not have high sensitivity.

The culture technique is another significant technique that is regarded as the gold standard TB diagnosis technique. The bacteria are cultivated in special media in controlled laboratory conditions in this technique. After the growth of the bacteria, it can be tested to resistance against various anti-TB drugs. This is done by what is referred to as drug susceptibility testing (DST), which gives accurate results but takes a number of weeks because of the slow growth rate of the organism.

Drug-resistant TB is extensively diagnosed with molecular diagnostic techniques that are more accurate and faster. GeneXpert (CBNAAT) test is one of the most popular methods. The

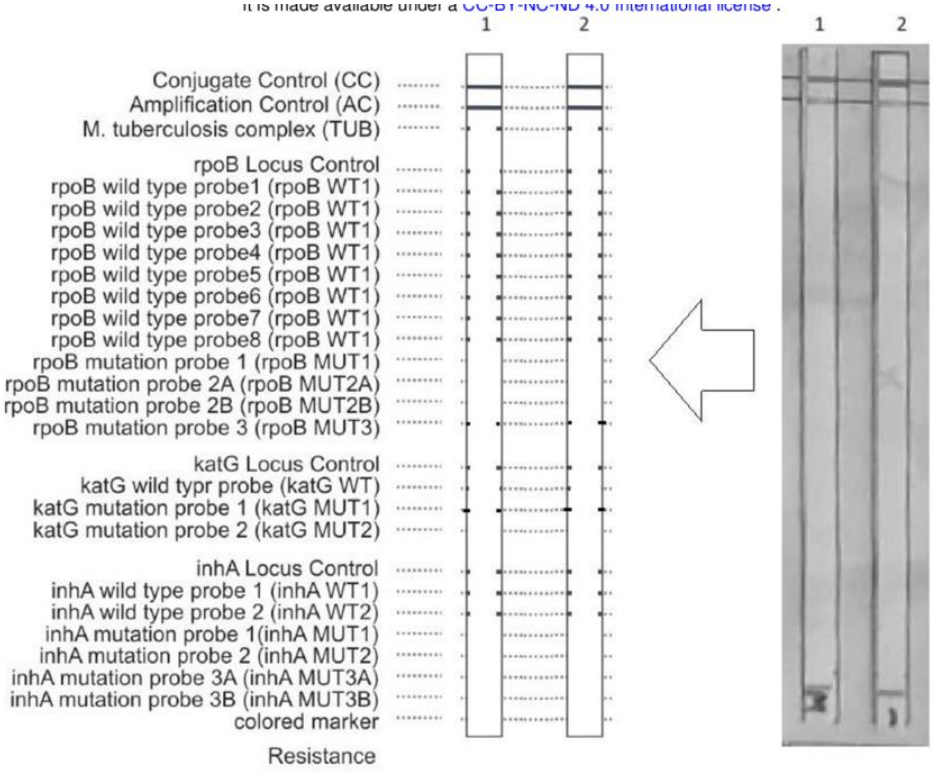
test is an automated detection of the Mycobacterium tuberculosis DNA and, with the help of this technology, the resistance to rifampicin is detected within a few hours. It is very much sensitive, and is usually utilized in national TB control programs.

The other high-technology procedure is the Line Probe Assay (LPA) that identifies genetic mutations linked to first-line and second-line drug resistance. This technique makes use of DNA amplification and hybridization to determine certain resistance patterns. It is especially helpful in the diagnosis of Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB).

Drug resistance diagnosis is essentially founded on identification of mutation in certain genes. As an illustration, the resistance to rifampicin is linked with mutation in rpoB gene and the resistance to isoniazid is linked with mutation in katG gene or inhA promoter region.

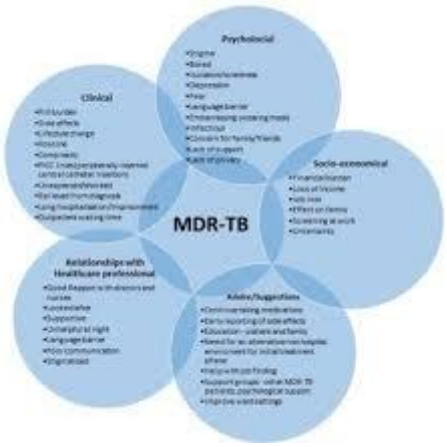
Besides laboratory procedures, clinical evaluation is also significant in diagnosis. The persistent cough, fever, loss of appetite, and night sweats, as well as the past history of treatment failure or relapse, are the signs that make one suspicious of drug-resistant TB. With these clinical findings along with laboratory results, they assist in diagnosing the diagnosis.

Although the methods of diagnosis have improved, there are still a number of challenges. Traditional procedures are very time-consuming whereas the molecular methods do not identify all forms of resistance. Furthermore, expensive prices and low accessibility to modern diagnostic equipment in resource constrained environments prevent early diagnosis.



7. Challenges in Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB)

Drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) is a menace to the health systems of countries as it is a complex disease with a difficult treatment process, high patient and health infrastructure burden, and a high mortality rate. In comparison to drug-sensitive TB, DR-TB needs a better and long-lasting treatment with second-line drugs that are less effective, more toxic, and more costly. The issue of these complicates the control and management of DR-TB.



The long-term treatment is one of the significant difficulties. Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR -TB) or extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR -TB) patients may need to be treated up to 9 to 24 months (or more). Such a long period of time makes patients more likely to quit therapy prematurely. The impact of long-term treatment is also fatigue, psychological strain, and low quality of life that have adverse consequences on patient adherence.

The second-line drugs also have toxicities and side effects which are another significant challenge. The medications employed in the treatment of DR-TB have severe side effects, like hearing impairment, renal toxicity, liver and mental illnesses. Such side effects do not only affect the health of the patient, but also make the patient unwilling to proceed with his treatment. These negative consequences have to be addressed with the help of medical assistance, which complicates the treatment further.

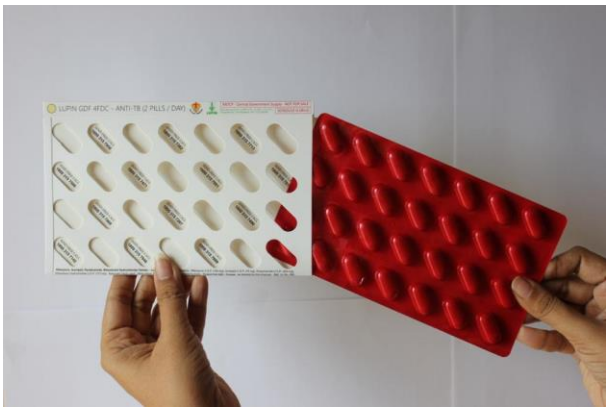
There is a strong association between poor treatment adherence and the issues of long duration and drug toxicity. A large number of patients do not adhere to the treatment program because of their ignorance, side effects, or socio-economic challenges. The intermittent or incomplete treatment causes treatment failure and the resistance progresses further to put a vicious cycle that proves hard to develop.

The second significant challenge is the expensive treatment cost. Treatment of drug-resistant TB is much costly as compared to drug-sensitive TB treatment. This excludes only medications and also diagnostic tests, hospitalization, and follow-up care. In poor and middle-income countries, where TB is the leading cause of the disease, a large number of patients cannot afford these costs, which results in delayed or undergoing treatment.

Poor accessibility to modern diagnostic centers is also a big problem. Although the use of molecular diagnostic tools is fast and accurate, the tools are not very common in every region. In most of the rural or resource starved areas, diagnosis continues to rely on the slower traditional techniques, which slows the process of getting the right treatment initiated and exposes them to higher chances of spreading the disease.

The management of DR-TB is also complicated by the poor healthcare system in most countries. Insufficient supply of trained medical practitioners, absence of the right monitoring systems, and irregular drug supply may result in mishandling of the instances. All of these systemic problems lead to drug resistance development and transmission.

The social stigma and discrimination of the tuberculosis stand out as the major obstacles. A lot of patients are afraid of being socially isolated or stigmatized that is why they are afraid to seek medical assistance. This delay in treatment and diagnosis is what enables the disease to advance and chances of infecting other people are on the rise. Stigma is a critical issue that needs to be addressed by educating people on how to fight TB.



The other problem is transmission of resistant strains. Direct person to person transmission of drug resistant TB results in primary drug resistance. This implies that even before patients are administered treatment, they can be infected with resistant bacteria. This transmission can only be controlled through effective infection control, which includes early detection, isolation of the infected patient, ventilation etc.The fact that TB co-exists with other diseases especially the HIV contributes to further complexity. It is common sense that patients with

low immune system are more prone to infection with TB and may develop severe and resistant cases of the disease. The treatment of co-infections needs to be coordinated carefully and integrated healthcare is required.

Also, low awareness and education of patients and communities is a factor of the continued existence of DR-TB. Not many people understand the necessity to undergo treatment or the effects of drug resistance. There is a need to enhance health-seeking behavior by increasing awareness and encouraging positive health behavior through health education programs.

CONCLUSION:

Drug resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) has become one of the greatest threats to the world in the control of tuberculosis. It makes the treatment process difficult, decreases the cure rates, and raises the mortality and transmission rates in the communities. Resistance of Mycobacterium tuberculosis is mostly caused by inappropriate treatment regimes, poor compliance of patients, and health care systems lapses, and thus through proper interventions, it can be prevented.

The conceptual overview of DR-TB underscores the fact that genetic mutations in the bacteria cause anti-tubercular drugs to be ineffective and this results in other forms of tuberculosis like multidrug-resistant (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB). These types entail more costly, prolonged and toxic therapy plans, and this only goes ahead to present a difficulty in the handling of patients. Lack of awareness, side effects and financial burden are likely to lead to incomplete treatment thus aggravating the problem.

With the development of diagnostic technologies, the detection of drug resistance has become more efficient, and timely and adequate treatment has become possible. Access to these technologies in the resource-poor settings is however, a significant obstacle. Likewise, newer drugs have better treatment results, but there is still a problem of the availability and affordability of new drugs.

Another point that the study makes is that the DR-TB is best controlled through a complex approach. The steps to be taken include early diagnosis, strong adherence to treatment, robust healthcare infrastructure and enhanced patient support systems. Awareness campaigns, infection control and the elimination of social stigma are some of the methods of public health that ensure the spread of resistant strains is prevented.

Here are **70 references** for your project *"Drug Resistance in Tuberculosis: Challenges and Management"* (theory-based, standard academic format):

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