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# Latent tuberculosis screening and treatment among asylum seekers: a mixed-methods study

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**LTBI screening and treatment among asylum seekers is feasible and effective when high quality of care is provided, including special attention for culture-sensitive education about TB and LTBI and collaboration with partner organisations** <http://bit.ly/2Lf6Y1I>

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Evidence on conditions for implementation of latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) screening and treatment among asylum seekers is needed to inform tuberculosis (TB) control policies. We used mixed-methods to evaluate the implementation of an LTBI screening and treatment programme among asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

**Methods:** We offered voluntary LTBI screening to asylum seekers aged  $\geq 12$  years living in asylum seeker centres from countries with a TB incidence  $> 200$  per 10 000 population. We calculated LTBI screening and treatment cascade coverage, and assessed associated factors with Poisson regression using robust variance estimators. We interviewed TB care staff (seven group interviews) and Eritrean clients (21 group and 21 individual interviews) to identify programme enhancers and barriers.

**Results:** We screened 719 (63% of 1136) clients for LTBI. LTBI was diagnosed among 178 (25%) clients; 149 (84%) initiated LTBI treatment, of whom 129 (87%) completed treatment. In-person TB and LTBI education, the use of professional interpreters, and collaboration with partner organisations were enhancers for LTBI screening uptake. Demand-driven LTBI treatment support by TB nurses enhanced treatment completion. Factors complicating LTBI screening and treatment were having to travel to public health services, language barriers and moving from asylum seeker centres to the community during treatment.

**Conclusion:** LTBI screening and treatment of asylum seekers is feasible and effective when high quality of

care is provided, including culture-sensitive TB education throughout the care cascade. Additionally, collaboration with partner organisations, such as agencies responsible for reception and support of asylum seekers, should be in place.