

# Assessment of Nutritional Status of Sputum Positive Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients in a Medical College

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Tuberculosis (TB) has been understood as a disease of wasting since it causes significant deficiencies in nearly every nutritional marker.

**Aims and Objective:** The purpose of this study is to assess the nutritional status of patients of sputum positive pulmonary TB patients and to identify the factors if malnutrition is present.

**Materials and Methods:** Two hundred patients of sputum positive for pulmonary TB were selected in a medical college on an outpatient service basis. The most common nutritional and biochemical assessment was done by blood hemoglobin and serum albumin level. All other relevant parameters were also recorded.

**Results:** About 10.5% of patients of severe anemia, 20% of patients of moderate anemia, and 35.5% of patients of mild anemia were found. About 12.5% cases of severe albumin deficiency (<2 g/dl), 24.5% cases of moderate albumin deficiency (≤2.5 g/dl), and 37% cases of mild albumin deficiency (≤3 g/dl) were also noted. There was a significant correlation between decrease calorie intake and decrease albumin levels. In the rural population, there were 79.16% malnourished in <20 years age group. Male preponderance (66%) was noted with male:female ratio of 2:1. About 86.5% of the patients were illiterate. About 87% of patients belong to lower social class. About 37% of cases were smoker and out of these smokers, 71% were malnourished. About 35% of cases were alcoholic and out of these alcoholic, 71% were malnourished.

**Conclusion:** Sputum positive TB patients have poor nutritional status. Malnutrition is found in individuals with factors of rural background, male patients, poor literary status, low family income, smoking, and alcohol addiction.

**Key words:** Albumin, Hemoglobin, Malnutrition, Tuberculosis

## INTRODUCTION

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease which is closely related to poverty, under-nutrition, and poor immune function.<sup>[1]</sup> Body mass index (BMI) (kg/m<sup>2</sup>), skinfold thickness, mid-upper arm circumference, grip strength, body fat percentage, calorie stores, muscle mass, serum albumin, blood hemoglobin, plasma retinol, plasma zinc,

selenium, iron, and Vitamins A, C, D, and E have all been found to be depressed in TB patients.<sup>[2-4]</sup> Several vitamin deficiencies have been seen to be common in TB patients. Furthermore, the risk of active TB has also been ascribed to vitamin deficiency.<sup>[5]</sup> Therefore, it can be difficult to distinguish vitamin deficiency that happened from the disease from vitamin deficiency that predisposed to the development of the disease.<sup>[6,7]</sup> Vitamin A deficiency is perhaps the best-studied micronutrient deficiency in TB with many studies demonstrating markedly decreased serum levels in TB patients.<sup>[8-10]</sup> In TB, weight loss is one of the most common manifestations of nutritional wasting, though probably not the most clinically significant in terms of effect on health and survival. The bulk of weight loss in patients with TB is fat mass, though the fat-free component

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also lost in significant amounts, has more of a result on the physical functioning of the patient. Protein deficiency has been described in TB and albumin and prealbumin have been found to be useful markers both for the diagnosis of deficiency and monitoring of its reversal.<sup>[11,12]</sup> Like TB, HIV often results nutritional deficiencies and clinical wasting, particularly in the later stages.<sup>[13,14]</sup> Malnutrition decreases the efficacy of the Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine in two different ways. First, the maintenance of good nutrition is important for continuing vaccine-induced immune protection. Due to deteriorating nutritional status, tuberculin skin test and BCG vaccination result in a marked decrease in the size of indurations.<sup>[15]</sup> Second, severe malnutrition during BCG administration can permanently affect vaccine-induced immune protection.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Review of Literature

TB is associated with various socio-economic factors such as poverty, poor housing, and economic deprivation, which causes poor nutritional status and poor immune function. Nutrition is important for making healthy and proper functioning of all systems of the body including the immune system. This is because malnutrition weakens the immune system and thus the capability of the individual to fight fatal infection like TB and their ability to halt disease progression will be compromised.<sup>[17]</sup> Treating of comorbid conditions has value for improving access and responses to TB treatment and it should be a part of care for people with TB. The aim should be to improve the general health and quality of life. The food and nutritional care successfully result health promotion and disease prevention. Under-nutrition is an important risk factor as well as a common consequence of TB. However, nutrition assessment and care are important components of improving rehabilitation and quality of people's life. Improved nutritional care and support can improve the health outcomes for people with TB. To improve the clinical care of people with TB, the focus is specially done on nutritional assessment, counseling, and management.<sup>[18]</sup>

Malnutrition refers to either overnutrition or undernutrition or both. Undernutrition refers to the nutritional status of the person having suboptimal and thereby health and growth will be impaired. Undernutrition may be due to illness-causing decreased nutrient intake and metabolism or result from inadequate intake of macronutrients, micronutrients, or both.<sup>[19-21]</sup> Undernutrition is commonly associated with malabsorption, pneumonia, TB, and HIV. The association between TB and undernutrition has been known since before. Undernutrition is endemic in India. About 34% of men and 36% of women 15–49 years in India are undernourished as per NFHS-3 estimates. As undernutrition, the leading cause of immunodeficiency globally, weakens power to fight against the TB. These people are at risk up to 4 times more likely to develop TB

disease than healthy people.<sup>[22]</sup> TB makes undernutrition worse and undernutrition weakens the immunity power. As a result, latent TB will develop into active disease.<sup>[23]</sup> Most patients of active TB are in a catabolic state and result in weight loss.<sup>[24-26]</sup>

Weight loss is found to be one of the most common presenting complaints of patients with TB.<sup>[27,28]</sup> Weight loss in TB can be caused by several factors such as reduced food intake due to loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain, nutrient losses from vomiting and diarrhea, and metabolic changes due to the disease.<sup>[29,30]</sup> Low BMI and lack of adequate weight gain with TB treatment are the increased risk factors for death<sup>[31]</sup> and TB relapse<sup>[32,33]</sup> and may indicate the severity of TB, poor treatment response and/or the presence of other comorbid conditions.

TB can worsen preexisting undernutrition by decreasing appetite and by increased catabolism. High prevalence of undernutrition in TB patients results in increased deaths and risk of relapse. The prevalence, severity, and implications of undernutrition in Indian TB patients particularly are found from India's rural areas compared to urban areas.<sup>[34]</sup>

Nutrition care or management of persons with active TB with moderate undernutrition includes assessing their nutritional status, identifying, and treating the underlying causes of malnutrition and improving the nutrient intake through education, counseling, food assistance, and other activities.<sup>[35]</sup> TB is commonly associated with comorbidities such as HIV, diabetes mellitus, smoking, and alcohol or substance misuse. These should be fully considered during nutrition screening, assessment, and counseling. Unintentional weight loss is one of the best predictors of worst clinical outcome. In older people, it is associated with significant morbidity and mortality.<sup>[36]</sup>

### Aims and Objectives

Main aims and objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the nutritional status of the patient having sputum positive pulmonary TB
2. If malnutrition is found, assessment of the factors affecting malnutrition.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted from December 15, 2015, to September 15, 2016, in a government medical college. It was a cross-sectional study of sputum smear-positive TB patients. As per the previous year data of sample collection (2014), on an average 1482 sputum smear-positive patients were diagnosed and treated in outpatient

department, roughly seven sputum smear-positive patients were diagnosed per day. Hence, every seventh patient who was diagnosed as sputum smear-positive in outpatient department by systematic random sampling technique was opted for the study. The desired sample size of 200 was achieved in almost 10 months. Anthropometric measurements were done using parameters such as height, weight, and BMI. The Quetelet index relates weight (kg) to the square of the height (m<sup>2</sup>), which enables calculation of BMI. The WHO categorizes underweight as BMI <18.5, normal as 18.5–24.9, overweight as 25–29.9, and obese as 30–39.9, and extreme obesity >40. Most common nutritional and biochemical assessment was done by blood hemoglobin and serum albumin level.

### Inclusion Criteria

All sputum positive patients diagnosed as TB as per diagnostic algorithm under RNTCP by sputum microscopy having consent for study had been included in the study.

### Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria were excluded in the study:

1. Patient refusing to give consent to participate in the study
2. Sputum negative pulmonary TB
3. Extrapulmonary TB
4. Carcinoma lung
5. Other causes of pulmonary diseases.

The pre-tested, semi-structured, and validated questionnaire was used to get the information about the personal history, socio-economic status, nutritional history, and physical examination. The questionnaire included the personal history of the patient, i.e., name, age, sex, address, education, occupation, and income. Modified Kuppaswamy scale was used to assess socio-economic status of the patients which is based on three parameters that are education, occupation, and income.

Furthermore, medical history of the patient regarding RNTCP AIT category of the patient, HIV status, and metabolic disease was enquired. History of smoking and alcoholism was taken. Patients were also examined physically for vital signs, pallor etc. Patient was investigated for anemia and hypoproteinemia. Nutritional history including daily diet, calorie calculation on diet basis, and calorie requirement according to weight and occupation was taken and assessed.

BMI was calculated by Quetelet's index (Weight in kg/height in m<sup>2</sup>). Historically, serum proteins such as albumin have been widely used by physicians to determine patient nutritional status. Serum albumin <2 g/dl is defined as severe, <2.5 g/dl is moderate, and <3 g/dl is mild malnutrition.

History of weight loss and signs of undernutrition, such as visible wasting or edema, were noted. Clinical assessment for comorbid conditions and concurrent treatments was also recorded. History and clinical diagnosis, medical history was helpful in raising suspicion for increased risk of malnutrition and the presence or absence of inflammation. Physical examination revealed the presence of several of the diagnostic characteristics of malnutrition such as weight loss or gain, fluid retention, loss of muscle or fat, and other signs of specific macro and/or micronutrient deficiencies.

Screening included the questions regarding loss of appetite, loss of weight, mobility, any stress, and BMI. Scoring was done after this. Then, assessment was done by asking about the diet including meals, protein intake, fluid intake, and nutritional status. Mid arm circumference was measured by measuring the circumference of the left upper arm, measured at the mid-point between the tip of the shoulder and the tip of the elbow. Calf circumference was measured at the fullest part of the calf. Screening and assessment score was calculated. Information regarding food and nutrient intake were obtained from the patient and/or caregiver. A modified diet history, 24 h recall, "calorie counts" (either observed intake/estimated post-meal plate waste), and/or prior documentation of periods of inadequate food intake in the patient's medical record were used as "evidence" of inadequate intake. A food frequency multi-questionnaire was used to explore dietary intake over a period of time.

## OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

The present study was conducted on 200 cases of sputum positive pulmonary TB patients.

Following observations were drawn from the results of present study:

1. Out of 200 cases maximum number of patients were from 41 to 60 years age group (35.5%), followed by 21–40 years' age group (30.5%)
2. Mean age was  $45.36 \pm 18.974$
3. In rural population, there were 79.16% malnourished in <20 age group
4. About 63.93% were malnourished in 21–40 age groups, of which 64.1% were from rural area. About 54.92% were malnourished in 41–60 age groups, of which 74.35% were from rural area. About 59.09% were malnourished in more than 60 age groups. Among these, 84.61% from rural area [Table 1]
5. Most of the patients were from rural areas, i.e., 70.5% cases whereas urban area patients were 29.5%
6. Male preponderance (66%) was noted in our study, with male:female ratio 2:1

7. Out of 141 rural patients, 68.08% were males and 31.91% were females
8. Out of 59 urban patients, 61.01% were males and 38.98% were females
9. As per the modified Kuppuswamy classification, most of our patients (86.5%) were illiterate or studied up to primary school level whereas only 2% were graduates [Table 2]
10. Most of (85.5%) our patients were unemployed (41%) and unskilled worker (44.5%), whereas only 1.5% was skilled worker in regular employment
11. On the basis of education, occupation, and income, most of our patients belong to lower (87%) Kuppuswamy social class, of which 84.5% were in upper lower class and 2.5% in lower class, followed by middle Kuppuswamy social class (13%), of which 11% were in lower-middle, and 2% were in upper-middle class [Table 3]
12. Diabetes mellitus was present in 25.5% of cases
13. History of contact with active TB case was present in 8.5% of cases
14. About 37% of cases were smoker and out of these smokers, 71% were malnourished [Table 4]
15. About 35% of cases were alcoholic and out of these alcoholic, 71% were malnourished [Table 4]
16. Weight loss was reported by 95.5% cases, of which 75% reported more than 3 kg loss and 2.5% having 1–3 kg loss in past 1 week
17. Pallor was present in 85% of cases. Out of these, 65.29% were malnourished [Table 5]
18. Pallor with malnourished was seen in 69.36% of rural patients and 30.63% urban patients. Edema was present in 62.5% of cases
19. 61.5% cases have BMI below normal range as per the WHO criteria, i.e., underweight (<18.5). Mean BMI was 17.50 ± 3.94 [Table 6]
20. Out of 61.5% underweight patients, 29.26% were from urban area, of which 58.33% were males and 41.67% were females. About 70.73% were from rural area, of which 66.67% were males and 33.33% were females [Table 7]
21. Patient reported MIS questionnaire after taking history and doing examination. About 79% of cases were classified as malnourished category
22. Mid arm circumference was <21 cm in 76% of cases, and calf circumference was below 31 cm in 72% of cases
23. About 12.5% cases were having severe albumin deficiency (<2 g/dl), 24.5% were having moderate

**Table 1: Distribution of patients according to the age**

Age group (years)	≤20	21–40	41–60	>60
Number of patients (%)	24 (12)	61 (30.5)	71 (35.5)	44 (22)
Malnourished (%)	19 (79.16)	39 (63.93)	39 (54.92)	26 (59.09)
Rural (%)	11 (57.89)	25 (64.1)	29 (74.35)	22 (84.61)
Urban (%)	8 (42.11)	14 (73.68)	10 (52.63)	4 (21.05)
Mean±SD (years)	45.36±18.974			

**Table 2: Distribution of patients as per literacy level**

Education	Number of patients (%)
Primary school certificate, illiterate	173 (86.5)
Intermediate, post-high school diploma, high school certificate	23 (11.5)
Graduate or postgraduate	4 (2.0)
Total	200 (100.0)

**Table 3: Distribution of patients according to the modified Kuppuswamy scale**

Socioeconomic status	Number of patients (%)
Lower	5 (2.5)
Upper lower	169 (84.5)
Lower middle	22 (11.0)
Upper middle	4 (2.0)
Total	200 (100.0)

**Table 4: Distribution of patients based on their addiction**

Addiction	Number of patients (%)	Malnourished (%)
Smoking	74 (37.0)	53 (71)
Alcoholism	70 (35.0)	50 (71)

**Table 5: Distribution of pallor in patients**

Pallor	Number of patients (%)	Malnourished (%)
Yes	170 (85.0)	111 (65.29)
No	30 (15.0)	-
Total	200 (100.0)	-

**Table 6: Distribution of patients in relation to body mass index (who classification)**

BMI grading	Number of patients (%)
Overweight (>25)	6 (3)
Normal (18.5–24.9)	71 (35.5)
Underweight (<18.5)	123 (61.5)
Total	200 (100.0)
Mean±SD	17.50±3.94

BMI: Body mass index, SD: Standard deviation

**Table 7: Distribution of underweight patients in relation to area and gender**

Underweight	Number of patients (%)	
	Male	Female
Rural	58 (66.67)	29 (33.33)
Urban	21 (58.33)	15 (41.67)

**Table 8: Correlation between differential serum protein-albumin and calorie intake**

Differential Serum Protein-albumin	Calorie intake, n (%)				Total
	1%–25%	26%–50%	51%–75%	76%–100%	
<2 (g/dL)	3 (12.0)	13 (52.0)	9 (36.0)	0 (0.0)	25 (100.0)
≤2.5 (g/dL)	4 (8.2)	31 (63.3)	12 (24.5)	2 (4.1)	49 (100.0)
≤3 (g/dL)	5 (6.8)	31 (41.9)	29 (39.2)	9 (12.2)	74 (100.0)
>3 (g/dL)	11 (21.2)	20 (38.5)	14 (26.9)	7 (13.5)	52 (100.0)
P			0.031		
Significance			Significant		

**Table 9: Distribution of hemoglobin level of patients (who classification)**

Hemoglobin in (g/dL)	Number of patients (%)
<7 (severe)	21 (10.5)
7–8.9 (moderate)	40 (20)
9–10.9 (mild)	71 (35.5)
≥11 (normal)	68 (34)

albumin deficiency ( $\leq 2.5$  g/dl), and 37% having mild albumin deficiency ( $\leq 3$  g/dl). About 26% of patients have serum albumin in the normal range. There was a significant correlation between decrease calorie intake and decrease albumin in patients [Table 8]

24. About 10.5% of patients were having severe anemia. About 20% of patients were having moderate anemia. About 35.5% of patients were having mild anemia. About 34% had hemoglobin in normal range [Table 9].

Majority of the malnourished patients were from rural background. In contrast to normal population, higher proportion of malnourished was seen in males. Alcohol and smoking were found to be other factors affecting malnutrition. There is increased prevalence of malnutrition among the illiterate group. Poor nutrition status was seen in patients having low income.

## DISCUSSION

TB is associated with poverty and malnutrition. Nutritional status is significantly lower in patients with active TB compared with healthy controls. Factors affecting malnutrition need to be identified so that these can be addressed to have impact on TB. In the present study, out of 200 cases, maximum number of patients was from 41 to 60 years of age group (35.5%), followed by 21–40 years of age group (30.5%). These age group individuals are mostly out of home for earning purpose. It indicates high burden in economically earning group and impacts on financial burden on society. About 22% were in the age group >60 years and 12% were in the age group <20 years. Mean age of patients is  $45.36 \pm 18.974$ . About 79.16% were malnourished in  $\leq 20$  age group, of which 57.89%

were from rural areas. About 63.93% were malnourished in 21–40 age groups, of which 64.1% were from rural areas. About 54.92% were malnourished in 41–60 groups, of which 74.35% were from rural areas. Similarly, 59.09% were malnourished in >60 age group, of which 84.61% were from rural areas. In a study conducted by Nunez-Rocha *et al.*,<sup>[37]</sup> (2000), the mean age was  $42.4 \pm 19.9$  years which was almost similar to present study. In the present study, significant male predominance was found with male:female 2:1. Males were 66% and females were 34%. Likely due to male dominating society, more males are taking healthcare services than females and as males are mostly out of their home for earning purpose, so more likely to come in contact with open cases of TB. In a study conducted by Dargie *et al.*,<sup>[17]</sup> around 55.8% were males and 44.2% were females which is similar to our study. In our study, as per modified Kuppaswamy classification, most of our patients (86.5%) were illiterate or studied up to primary school level whereas only 2% were graduate showing the importance of literacy as per Table 4. In a study conducted by Dargie *et al.*,<sup>[17]</sup> 50.3% were illiterate or studied up to primary school. About 18.3% were tertiary educated. Most of our patients in present study were from rural area and India is a developing country. Hence, illiteracy is a major problem.

In the present study, most of (85.5%) our patients were unemployed (41%) and unskilled worker (44.5%), whereas only 1.5% were skilled worker in regular employment as per Table 5. In a study conducted by Dargie *et al.*,<sup>[17]</sup> 28.3% were unemployed and 14.7% were daily laborers. About 23.1% were employed. This difference is due to different sample collection. India is a developing country where unemployment is a major problem. Hence, earning is also affecting as observed. Earning is also a factor contributing in cause of malnutrition. On the basis of education, occupation and income, most of our patients belong to lower (87%) socio-economic class, of which 84.5% were in upper lower class and 2.5% in lower class, followed by middle social class (13%), of which 11% were in lower-middle and 2% were in upper-middle class. In the present study, HIV positivity was seen in only 2.5% cases. In a study conducted by Manjareeka and Nanda,<sup>[38]</sup> 12.3% of TB patients were HIV positive. In a study conducted by Giri *et al.*,<sup>[39]</sup> 17% of patients were HIV positive. In the present

study, diabetes mellitus was present in 25.5% of cases. In a study conducted by Raghuraman *et al.*,<sup>[40]</sup> the prevalence of diabetes in TB patients was found to be 29% cases which is similar to the present study.

In the present study, 37% of cases were smoker. In a study conducted by Mahishale *et al.*,<sup>[41]</sup> 32.21% were smokers which was similar to our study. In a study by Wang and Shen,<sup>[42]</sup> the proportion of cigarette smoking was 54.6% in TB cases, which was significantly higher than in controls (45.1%) in China. No female was smoker in our study. In the present study, 35% of cases were alcoholic. No females consumed alcohol. In a study conducted by Suhadev *et al.*,<sup>[43]</sup> 29% were found to consume alcohol which was very similar to our study.

Patient reported MIS questionnaire after taking history and doing an examination. Seven-nine percent of cases were classified as malnourished category, 17% were at risk of malnutrition, and 4% cases were in normal range. In the present study, 61.5% of cases had BMI below normal range as per the WHO classification and the mean BMI was  $17.50 \pm 3.94$ . Out of 123 underweight patients, 29.26% were from urban area and 70.73% were from rural areas. About 58.33% were males and 41.67% were females from urban areas. About 66.67% were males and 33.33% were females from rural areas. In a study conducted by Nunez-Rocha *et al.*,<sup>[37]</sup> mean BMI was  $19.8 \pm 3.2$ ; 57% presented malnutrition. In a study conducted by Kumar *et al.*,<sup>[44]</sup> mean BMI was 17.33 which was same as our study. About 12.5% cases were having severe albumin deficiency ( $<2$  g/dl), 24.5% were having moderate albumin deficiency ( $\leq 2.5$  g/dl), and 37% having mild albumin deficiency ( $\leq 3$  g/dl). About 26% patients have serum albumin in normal range.<sup>[45]</sup> Hence, a total of 74% of patients were having hypoalbuminemia in our study. In a study conducted by Morris *et al.*,<sup>[46]</sup> 72% were having hypoalbuminemia which is similar to our study. Hemoglobin level was below 7 g/dl (severe anemia) in 10.5% cases, between 7 g/dl and 8.9 g/dl (moderate anemia) in 20% cases, and between 9 g/dl and 11 g/dl (mild anemia) in 35.5% cases. Hence, a total of 66% of patients were anemic in our study. In a study conducted by Nagu *et al.*,<sup>[47]</sup> 86% were anemic which is similar to our study. In a study conducted by Olaniyi and Aken'Ova,<sup>[48]</sup> anemia occurred in 93.6% cases which are similar to our study.

## CONCLUSION

Sputum positive TB patients have poor nutritional status. Malnutrition is found in individuals with factors of rural background, male patients, poor literary status, low family income, smoking, and alcohol addiction. Hence, we advise to increase the awareness among patients regarding the

importance of nutrition and to discourage the addiction to improve the prognosis of TB patients and decrease the prevalence of TB. Macronutrient requirements in active TB like other infectious diseases are likely to increase energy requirement. Studies show that subjects who receive food supplements during TB treatment tend to gain more weight compared with those not receiving food supplements.

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