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Title: Approaching tuberculosis in a vulnerable group

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Body: Introduction: The homeless represents a high risk group for TB, with poor access to health care services. TB prevalence among the around 5,000 homeless estimated to live in Bucharest is not known. Aims and objectives: To detect active TB cases in homeless population in Bucharest. Methods: A screening program was developed based on partnership between the National TB Programme and Samusocial Romania (NGO providing medical, psychological and social support to homeless people). Persons coming to the surgery service of Samusocial have been screened for TB in TB facilities. Any homeless giving a positive informed consent has been included and only exclusion criterion was having another chest X-ray in the previous 6 months. Results: In the 248 cases registered from January to June 2011, 83.9% were males, mean age was 43.9 years (from 18 to 73 years old), 30.2% didn't have any ID document and half were at first medical consultation. TB has been suspected in 44.4% by clinical criteria, but from eligible persons only 48% were screened by chest X-ray, 14.1% refused and 35.5% didn't come back for screening. Active TB has been found in 8 cases (6.7% from the screened persons), 2 of them negative to clinical examination. None was previously examined even though they have free access to TB services. All cases were admitted in long-stay hospitals for treatment and monitoring. Conclusions: In this project the prevalence of active TB was found very high in the homeless population (6,700%ooo). Providing free access to TB services is not sufficient to detect TB cases in this high risk group and active screening programs are necessary.