Title: Mycobacterium tuberculosis, how long did you walk?

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Body: Aim: Determine the time elapsed between the onset of symptoms until the first observation by a health professional and the time from the first observation to diagnosis. Methods: We conducted a questionnaire-based survey to pts with active TB followed in the CDC treatment of VNG in May and June 2012. Results: 54 pts, 68% males, mean age of 48 years. The first healthcare place that the patient went after the onset of symptoms was to emergency department 20 pts (37%), a general practitioner 17 pts (31%), a hospital consultation 9 pts (17%), a private clinic 3 pts (5%), Chest Diagnosis Centre 3 pts (5%), a pharmacy 2 pts (4%). The median time from onset of symptoms and the observation by a health professional was 37 days. Patients with symptoms of anorexia and weight loss took longer to access to health care (53 vs 18 days, p = 0.01 and 52 vs 12 days, respectively). The pt was observed on average 3 times before the diagnosis was made. Pts who took less than 15 days to access to the health care system went mainly to the emergency department (48%), while pts who took more than 15 days were observed mainly by a general practitioner (52%, p = 0.03). The median time from the first consultation and diagnosis was 56 days. Pts with respiratory symptoms had on average a diagnosis faster than the others (38 vs 127 days, p = 0.01). The majority of pts in whom the diagnosis was made in less than 15 days, were first observed in the emergency department (57%), while pts whose diagnosis took longer than 15 days were observed by a general practitioner (39%, p=0.03). The median time from onset of symptoms and diagnosis was 92 days. Conclusion: These results suggest the need to implement strategies for earlier diagnosis of tuberculosis.