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The potential impact of COVID-19-related disruption on tuberculosis burden

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Any benefit of social distancing on TB deaths is likely to be outweighed by health service disruption. As such, it is crucially important to maintain and strengthen TB-related health services during, and after, the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://bit.ly/30aWZnp>

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To the Editor:

Before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, over 4000 people were dying from tuberculosis (TB) every day [1]. As with past emergencies [2], the impact of COVID-19 on TB outcomes is a serious cause for concern [3] but is currently unknown. Health system overload, due to high numbers of COVID-19 cases, as well as interventions necessary to limit the transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), could result in severe reductions in health service availability and access for the detection and treatment of TB cases [4]. However, physical distancing interventions could also limit *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* transmission outside of households, where most transmission occurs [5]. This has not been adequately explored in concurrent work [6–8], and it is currently unclear whether social distancing could compensate for disruptions in TB services, and what the impact of these combined COVID-19 disruption effects on TB burden is likely to be.