

Implementing a standardised patient study to evaluate the quality of TB care in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Background

- Studies utilising Standardised Patients (SPs) to evaluate quality of tuberculosis (TB) care have become increasingly common in high burden countries; **however, few have been undertaken in South Africa**
- SPs are trained to portray a scripted medical condition to healthcare providers in real-life settings
- Given South Africa's high burden of TB and TB-HIV, **we aimed to describe the implementation of a TB-related SP study in this setting**



An SP undertakes a mock consultation with a medical trainee while her colleagues evaluate her performance.

Intervention

- Before SP training, we consulted with other SP research groups in a variety of settings and sectors to learn from their experiences:
 - ✓ **India (private and informal)**
 - ✓ **Kenya (public & private)**
 - ✓ **China (public)**
 - ✓ **South Africa (public)**

Findings & Impact

Challenges Identified

SP recruitment & retention

- Previously, **retaining trained SPs for short-term contracts** has been identified as a challenge
- Given that success of data collection is contingent on the dedication of highly trained and capable SPs, we **developed recruitment and retention strategies before seeking applicants**

Seeking physician consent

- Unlike other studies, ethics bodies required **prior consent of physicians to participate** given the importance of transparency in post-Apartheid South Africa

Solutions Implemented

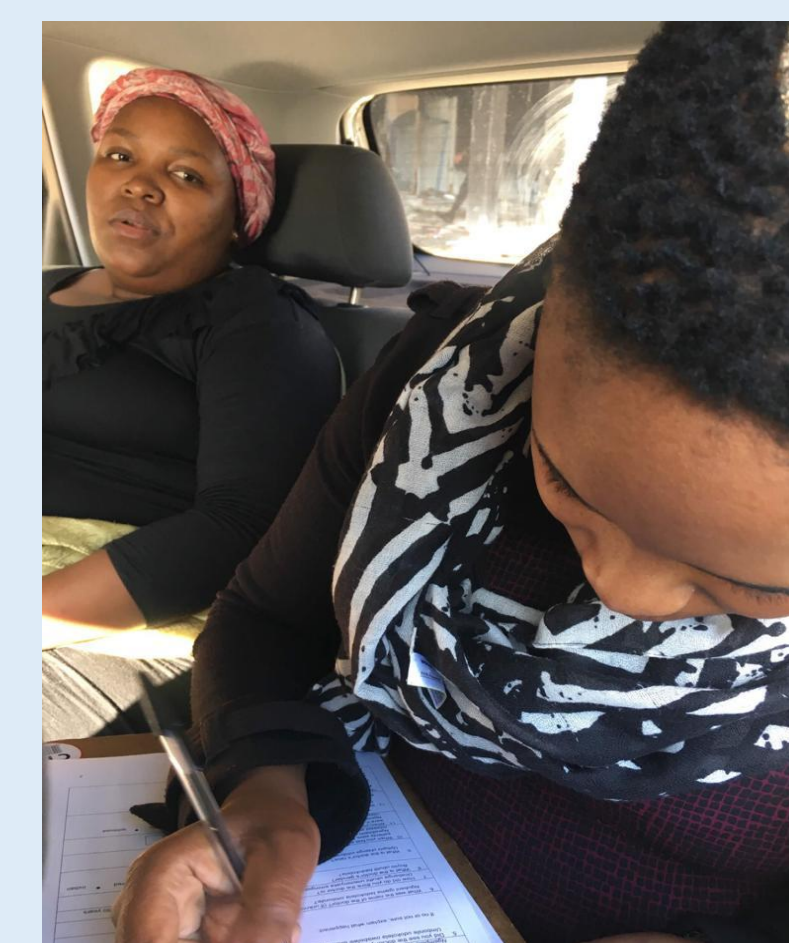
- **Collaborated with a medical school** to recruit existing SPs in addition to a general call for applications
- Shortlisted applicants for a **2-day assessment** to evaluate ability to:
 - ✓ act and improvise in mock consultations
 - ✓ recall conversation, procedures, and instructions
 - ✓ work well in a team
- 12 high-performing applicants attended **3-week workshop**; case presentations were adapted to the local setting and assigned to SPs
- 8 SPs were hired following visits to private GP advisors for **in-field testing**
- **SPs with first-hand experience of TB** were given the space to share their knowledge

PCT1	Was the doctor distracted by anything during the consultation? Kuphela kuthone ukhuzamazane abalibela ngendabho usay? Yes No	Yes	No
PCT1a	If yes, describe: Uma kungo-Yes, chaza:		
PCT2	Were there other people in the room that were not there to assist in your consultation? Kungaba kuthona abanye abantu ababesigumbini abantu loddokwela abobengakho ukuzosiza? Yes No	Yes	No
PCT2a	If yes, describe: Uma kungo-Yes, chaza:		
PCT3	Overall, did you like this doctor? Okho, ngabe umhambeli loddokwela? Yes No	Yes	No
PCT4	Would you go to this doctor again? Ungabuyela kuloddokwela futhi? Yes No	Yes	No
SECTION 11: GLOBAL ASSESSMENT (GA)			
FO READ: Rank the following questions with 1) Definitely, 2) Some-what, and 3) Not at all.			
GA1	Did the doctor make you feel comfortable? Ngabe ukhululeka abanye wazizwa ukhululeke? (Definitely) Some-what Not at all	Definitely	Some-what
GA2	Did the doctor make you feel respected? Ungabonisa ubungqirso wazizwa ubungqirso? (Definitely) Some-what Not at all	Definitely	Some-what
GA3	Did the doctor address your concerns satisfactorily? (e.g. did s/he seem like s/he was listening, believed you were ill and appeared to want to help) Ngabe ukhululeka wabambambisa ukhululeka ngendabho yakho? (Definitely) Some-what Not at all	Definitely	Some-what

- In teams of 2, **research staff visited clinics for provider consent**, often making multiple visits; although resource intensive, visits provided **opportunity to allay provider concerns**
- Staff emphasised identifying **best practices and sharing findings** with participants
- Buy-in from local **Independent Practice Associations** built provider trust

Impact

- 3/8 SPs recruited from med school SP programme; provided guidance to other recruits
- **Pre-assessment and in-field testing identified highly-skilled and motivated SPs**
- Shared experiences with TB helped build team morale
- **All SPs hired were retained for the duration of study**
- Only 1.4% providers correctly **detected** SP visits



An SP doing an Exit Interview with a Field Officer, after a GP consultation

- 54% of providers approached consented to participate (n=100/186)
- 220 interactions were successfully undertaken with 96 providers

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Dedicated standardised patients
Participating physicians

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South African Medical Association

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