
Finding the right frame: what is the problem represented to be in a national tuberculosis strategy?



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This paper examines how a problem representation that targets specific populations impacted the formulation of a national tuberculosis (TB) strategy in Canada. Globally, one third of the world's population is infected with TB, mainly as latent infections.¹ TB has garnered increased international attention with the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB.² International standards endorse that low incidence countries such as Canada enact TB policies that address the most vulnerable and hard to reach population segments.² In Canada, two groups are disproportionately affected by TB: the Aboriginal and foreign-born populations.³

In 2014, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada released a national strategy for TB.³ My paper analyzes the "Framework for Action" policy document while focusing on problem framing using Bacchi's theory of "What's the problem represented to be?"⁴

This analysis is important because the choice of a problem frame reduces the complexity of TB and its political and social connections. Specifically, problem frames containing target populations are influenced by the social constructs of that population.⁵

Critical engagement with the problem representation of TB in the Aboriginal and foreign-born populations in the "Framework for Action" provides insight into how national government will respond to TB at both a domestic and global level. Problem framing shapes priorities, policies and eventually, people.⁴ For the foreseeable future in Canada, Aboriginal populations and the foreign-born will navigate targeted interventions aimed at decreasing TB rates to predefined, international standards.³ Continued research surrounding the manner in which these endeavors are pursued can ensure the policy's intended beneficiaries do not encounter undue burden in attempting to achieve the laudable goal of TB elimination.

Future directions with this project could include pursuing key informant interviews to probe the perceptions of the stakeholders surrounding the issue as well as examining a cross-country comparison.

Global Health Relevancy

- The World Health Organization End TB strategy post 2015 aims to end the global TB epidemic and includes a framework for targeted interventions for high-risk groups in low-incidence countries.
- The problem representation of TB in Canada focuses on two target groups. The manner in which these groups are socially constructed has implications for TB policies both domestically and globally.