

MISCELLANEOUS - PUBLIC HEALTH

GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL OF THORACIC MEDICINE (GHTM), TAMBARAM SANATORIUM, A BRIEF HISTORY THROUGH TIME.

Vinod Kumar Viswanathan ⁽¹⁾

(1) Institute of Thoracic Medicine Madras Medical College

Abstract

BACKGROUND : Government hospital of thoracic medicine (GHTM), Tambaram sanatorium is a tertiary care centre for patients with lung diseases which has been functioning since its inception in 1928. It was declared as a centre of excellence for HIV care in 2007 and centre of excellence for treatment of drug resistant TB cases by the Government of India in 2022. The article describes the history of the institute in detail.

KEYWORDS : Tambaram sanatorium, Centre of excellence; HIV; TB; drug resistance

Government hospital of thoracic medicine, Tambaram sanatorium – A brief History through time

Government hospital of Thoracic Medicine (GHTM) is a tertiary care centre for patients with lung diseases which has been functioning since its inception in 1928. It was declared as a centre of excellence for HIV care in 2007 and centre of excellence for treatment of drug resistant TB cases by the Government of India in 2022.

Brief note on historical significance of Government hospital of thoracic medicine.

Thambaram sanatorium was started on 9th April 1928 by Dr. David Chowry Muthu at the foothills of Pachamalai for the treatment of Tuberculosis patients with 12 beds initially over a 240 acres campus. Dr. David Chowry Muthu, who was an Associate Physician at Kings college, London and the chief Physician of Mendip Hills Sanatorium, Somerset was inspired by Gandhiji's teachings and established this sanatorium for a holistic care of Tuberculosis patients.



Photo of Dr. David Chowry Muthu & Tambaram sanatorium taken on the day of its inauguration

It was acquired by the Government of Madras in 1937 and functioning of the sanatorium for treating TB patients was continued uninterrupted since then.

This sanatorium was the site of the famous “Madras Study” for Tuberculosis conducted by Indian council of Medical Research (ICMR) in the 1950s which paved the way for the domiciliary treatment of Tuberculosis.

An unique rehabilitation centre for TB patients was started in the 1950s due to the efforts of the first union health minister Rajakumari Amrit Kaur and the then Chief minister of Madras, C. Rajagopalachari which has since been named Amrit Nagar colony. Here post TB destitute patients are employed and involved in various activities like book binding, wiring of chairs, kitchen gardening and this rehabilitation centre continues to function till date.

The sanatorium grew with the addition of more and more wards which were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s by various organisations including the armed forces, NCC etc in addition to the Government of Madras.

The last increment of beds strength to 776 was in 1976. With increasing awareness of other lung diseases, this hospital was renamed Government hospital of Thoracic medicine in 1980.

This hospital was among the first hospitals to admit HIV patients in 1993 and was among the first 8 hospitals across India to initiate anti retroviral therapy in 2004 by the Government of India, and has saved several lakh lives by this therapy. In this background this hospital was declared as centre of excellence for HIV care by the Government of India in 2007.



Please Scan this QR Code to

View this Article Online

Article ID: 2024:04:01:10

Corresponding Author: Vinod Kumar Viswanathan

e-mail : drvinodkumar76@gmail.com

Starting from various therapies for Tuberculosis before the era when medicines were used for therapy and sanatorium with its fresh air and clean environment was the mainstay of treatment, this hospital houses records of treatment of Tuberculosis from the days before medicines were started for Tuberculosis, which will be of historical interest for researchers in the future.

This hospital was one of the first six centres to start the drug, Bedaquiline for treatment of TB by the Government of India. It is also the site for various collaborative studies with national research institutes like National institute for research in Tuberculosis (NIRT) and National institute of epidemiology (NIE), together being involved in various researches and trials in the treatment of both TB and HIV.

Given the background of its rich history, sustained patient load, infrastructure and mentoring activities this hospital recently became one of the five **centres of excellence for Drug resistant TB care declared by the Government of India.**

Brief note on the infrastructure facilities of this hospital

This hospital, which started as a sanatorium for TB patients, is designed with 33 wards spread currently over 74 acres, so as to avoid airborne infections and spread of Tuberculosis. As said earlier this 33 wards, were mostly constructed during the period from 1928 to the 1970s and are still functioning and serving the needs of the poor and needy patients. These wards serve inpatients admitted with various forms of TB, HIV patients and patients with various other lung ailments like asthma, COPD, lung malignancy etc. Three intensive care units are functioning in the campus and cater to the needs of patients with respiratory failure.

A BSL3 level laboratory for serving the needs of both HIV and TB patients with state of the art laboratory is functioning with the goal of achieving Tuberculosis elimination as envisaged by the national strategic plan of the Government of India.

An out patient unit is functioning with infrastructure including CT scan and rehabilitation services for both post TB and post Covid patients. Following Government of India norms of integrated medicine, a yoga unit is also functioning in this campus.

Clinical work load at Government hospital of Thoracic medicine

This hospital caters to around 1.5 lakh Out patients per year with daily out patient attendance being about 500 to

700 patients per day. The average inpatient admission every year is around 15,000.

Every year 3000 to 4000 drug sensitive TB cases and 200 to 300 drug resistant TB cases are diagnosed and treated in this hospital and 4000 HIV patients are under the care of this institution. It is imperative to point here that this hospital caters not only to patients of Tamilnadu but also neighbouring states like Puducherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh etc. Recently we have started receiving patients from other states like Jarkhand, Bihar, etc and neighbouring countries like Burma. Recently a team from Timor Leste had visited this sanatorium to study and implement the best of care practices in TB being followed here in their country.

It was in recognition of the sustained services delivered by this hospital that the Government of India accorded the status of centre of excellence for both HIV and drug resistant TB care, the only such institution across this country.

Even during the Covid pandemic this hospital had admitted and treated 6000 Covid cases.

Academics at Government hospital of Thoracic medicine.

GHTM, attached to Government Stanley medical college, is serving as a post graduate training centre for post graduates of Pulmonary medicine, General medicine, community medicine and for respiratory therapy students. Students, not only from Tamilnadu but from various states across India, come here to learn management of various diseases including TB, HIV and various lung ailments.

GHTM has qualified professionals and faculty in the field of Pulmonary medicine, General medicine, Microbiology, Radiology and HIV medicine involved in academic training activities and also carrying out research in various department including Pulmonary medicine, General medicine and Microbiology.

Various conferences and learning activities are conducted here regularly with about 120 such programs having been conducted over the last five years alone.

This institution organised the 74th National TB conference in 2019 in which more than 700 delegates from various countries and Central TB division, Ministry of health and family welfare, Government of India participated.

Research activities of Government hospital of Thoracic Medicine

This institution has been at the forefront of research activities since the 1940s.

The famous Madras study which paved the way for home based treatment of Tuberculosis was done here.

Many collaborative research activities with various national institutes like national institute of research in Tuberculosis, National institute of epidemiology, national institute of Virology are currently under progress in the field of HIV and TB. Various research projects are also being carried out in airway disorders, intervention pulmonology and occupational lung diseases in this institution. Among the studies of note carried out in recent years is the Bedaquiline Conditional Access program of the Government of India's central Tb division, of which this institution was one of the partners and the results of this study revolutionised the treatment of Tuberculosis across the world and saved many a life of patients suffering from the deadly drug resistant form of Tuberculosis. Collaborative activities done with ICMR include the Madras study on domiciliary treatment of Tuberculosis, various clinical trials on newer drugs and regimens in both Tuberculosis and People living with HIV (PLHIV). One study of interest in recent times is the Cohorts of HIV resistance and progression in children and adults (COHRPICA) wherein GHTM is a member of consortium of

ICMR institutes involved with the objective of establishing a biorepository of HIV samples for future research needs and vaccine development.

In addition to collaborative research , other areas of collaboration include patient care and service delivery such as the program “ Wings of Support “ in collaboration with ICMR – National Institute of Research in Tuberculosis, wherein counselling sessions are conducted for both drug sensitive and resistant patients addressing various issues in TB treatment including adherence, tolerance of drugs, addressing side effects and adverse events, managing comorbidities, counselling on substance abuse etc.

GHTM is also involved in setting up a model palliative care centre and has partnered with Central Tb division, ICMR – NIRT and UNION in creating a centre of excellence for palliative care.

In summary, it is to be said that Government hospital of Thoracic medicine is a time honoured institution of historical and utmost public importance to the nation since 1928 and has been at the forefront of the battles against both TB and HIV and the amount of life and livelihood saved is immeasurable .