

# Patient empowerment

## The role of peer work and health communication



Union World conference on Lung health 2006 Symposium 24  
Patient perspectives in TB control and care. November 3 2006

Olav Aalberg ([oa@lhl.no](mailto:oa@lhl.no))  
Communication adviser, LHL



The Norwegian Heart and Lung Patient Organisation



# How former TB Patients define empowerment

- Be supported to improve their lives, both during and after treatment
- Have freedom to choose
- Take care of their own treatment
- Participate in TB control



# Empowering TB patients

- Improve their capacity to better control their health and life
- Improve their ability to assist other TB-patients in improving their lives (peer support)
- Their ability to assist TB-control programs and health care professionals

(Jean Macq: Empowerment and involvement of tuberculosis patients in TB-control. Documented experiences and practices, Stop TB and WHO, 2006)



# How to empower patients?

- Empowering through communication material developed with the patients  
Through this process patients are empowered,
- Good use of the communication material is also a contribution to empowerment



# Why health communication?

- Health communication empower patients, thus making a difference in TB control
- A shift to patient centered approach in TB care
- Facilitates behavioural change
- Improves adherence and success treatment outcomes



# Are the results reliable?

- Report on methods used to get a picture of changes resulting from interventions, and factors that influenced the process
- Action research approaches, and qualitative methods to measure effect
- Several methods are used in each project
- Results are used to document process results



# Empowerment is important for

- The patient and his family
- The larger community in which patients live
- The health care systems and TB control programmes



# Communicating with health-workers





# Patient empowerment - where?

- Internationally –patients participating in international structures, such as Stop TB
- TB Patient charter would never have been made without the push from patient activists and - organisations
- **Action** locally – where the patients live



# Conclusions I

- Former TB patients play an important role in helping patients complete treatment, promoting openness and reduce stigma
- Stigma is reduced when former and current TB patients speak openly about their disease within their family and community
- Information developed in cooperation with the users is more effective



## Conclusions II

- Health workers change their attitudes and behaviour when they are trained in health communication and relate to former TB-patients as partners
- Health workers relate to patients as individuals, not "objects"
- Starting where people are gives better odds for ownership and empowerment

