Objective. To examine the experiences and perspectives on the disease and stigma from the vantage point of the persons affected by TB in El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, México to inform research on health-related stigma and interventions. Materials and methods. Semi-structured interviews to study TB-related stigma and the impact on access and health-seeking behaviors with 30 Mexican-origin adults (18 years and older) undergoing TB treatment. Results. Barriers to accessing health services for TB; emotional distress due to their deteriorated physical and emotional condition; reactions ranging from depression, sadness; doubt, anger, and fear of rejection; distancing, fear of contagion, stigma, and feeling of discriminated against, and isolation from loved ones were reported. Conclusion. Stigma associated with TB is a barrier to health care access and to quality of life in tuberculosis management. Stigma adversely shapes the experience of treatment and recovery. Stigma is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, but something created by people and as such it can be “un-done” by those people as part of a collective which comprises society.

Abstract

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Keywords

Tuberculosis; health-related stigma; access to health care; US-Mexico border.