



## Simplified procedures to increase HIV testing at tuberculosis clinic

Partner Organisation(s):  
'Victor Babes' Clinical Hospital of Infectious Diseases and Pneumophthisiology Craiova

[www.vbabes-cv.ro](http://www.vbabes-cv.ro)



### OVERVIEW

Romania is among the countries in the EU/EEA with the highest prevalence of Tuberculosis (TB) and routine HIV testing of all patients diagnosed with tuberculosis is mandatory according to the National Guidelines for the Prevention, Surveillance and Control of Tuberculosis.

Despite high testing coverage, around 15% of TB patients are not tested for HIV. Before testing, a signed informed consent is legally required from the patient. This is a time-consuming process for the clinic staff that may lead to subsequent omission of HIV test offer or rejection to test by the patient.

An 12-month pilot intervention at Victor Babes Hospital aimed to increase HIV testing rates in individuals presenting with TB by introducing a patient information leaflet (PIL) to the patient before the consultation explaining the importance of HIV testing for patients with TB. The patient will be prepared for signing the consent and the doctor will spend less time on this process.

### APPROACH

01

**Training of all medical staff** involved in the diagnosis and treatment of TB patients on TB as an indicator condition for routine HIV testing.

02

**Online questionnaire**  
Completion of an online HIV testing questionnaire by doctors *to assess barriers and knowledge about HIV.*

03

**Patient Information Leaflet (PIL)**  
PIL about the importance of HIV testing distributed by nurses to TB clinic attendees.

04

**Informed consent (IC)**  
PIL reduced time doctors need to counsel and obtain mandatory written IC.

# Country Case Study: Romania



## HAVING AN HIV TEST AT THE TUBERCULOSIS CLINIC

Spitalul Clinic de Boli Infecțioase și Pneumoftiziologie "Victor Babeș" Craiova  
Clinica Pneumoftiziologie I

### Tuberculosis

You have been referred to this department due to suspected or confirmed infection with Tuberculosis (TB). TB is a contagious infection that usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, like the spine or the brain. It is caused by bacteria and is transmitted via saliva – coughing and sharing household with a TB infected person. You can have the bacteria in your body, but your immune system stops them from spreading and you will neither be sick nor contagious. If your immune system is suddenly impaired, the bacteria will start spreading and you will get sick. One reason for an impaired immune system could be an HIV infection.

It is important to emphasize that most people with TB will NOT have HIV infection. But we think it is worthwhile that everyone takes the test.

A routine HIV test of all patients will help us to identify the patients with HIV and provide timely treatment and care

HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is now a manageable condition with medication. Treatment is very successful, but it is most successful if the infection is identified at an early stage. The majority of patients will be on straightforward treatment experiencing few, if any, side effects.

As a patient at the Pneumoftiziologie clinic you will be offered an HIV test. A blood test will be drawn together with your routine blood tests. You can ask any questions you may have. Declining to have an HIV test will in no way affect the care you receive.

You will be asked to sign a written consent to have the HIV test done.

Anyone who accepts an HIV test will receive the test result. The result is confidential and known only to you and your treating physician/nurse.

Taking the test, and testing negative, has no implications for insurance or mortgage applications.

If the result is positive, you will be referred to the infectious diseases ward, where you will receive treatment and care for HIV.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Please keep this leaflet for your reference.

## HIGHLIGHTS

During the 12 months' pilot phase, all patients between the age of 18- and 65-years receiving treatment and care for TB, were offered an HIV test.

The introduction of PIL was well received among the patients as a source of information about the infections and by the doctors as a tool to reduce time spent on counseling.

**260 PATIENTS TESTED**  
total number of patients with TB tested for HIV during pilot.

**0.8% POSITIVITY RATE**  
2 new cases of HIV were identified among the 260 conducted tests.

**40% TESTING RATE INCREASE**  
TB testing rates increased from 67% at baseline to 94%, after the introduction of the PIL.

## LESSONS LEARNED



- Staff training, increased awareness and better patient information can lead to an increase in HIV testing – both due to more dedicated staff and better acceptance rates from the patients.



- Information materials such as the PIL are instrumental in overcoming barriers related to long and complex administrative procedures and in increasing the number of patients accepting to test for HIV.



- Such materials must provide information in a clear and concise manner with an opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

