



RePORT International Newsletter

March 2025

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WORLD TB DAY 2025

Perspectives from RePORT International Leadership

As World TB Day 2025 approaches, RePORT International members and Leadership Group share their insights on research priorities, community engagement, and the future of TB elimination efforts. This special feature highlights the diverse perspectives that inform RePORT's mission to combat TB globally.

A Person-Centered Approach to World TB Day

When asked about RePORT International's focus for World TB Day 2025, **Dr. Jerrold Ellner** emphasized the importance of understanding tuberculosis from the patient's perspective. "I think the unmet needs of people with TB vary significantly from country to country. As an academic community and researchers, we've focused extensively on developing new tools—how to diagnose, prevent, and treat TB—but perhaps not enough on examining the consequences for individuals. Only recently have people begun discussing the economic devastation that accompanies TB in a family. RePORT International is interested in looking beyond treatment to understand the long-term health consequences. I believe we should adopt a patient-oriented perspective for World TB Day—considering what it's truly like to live with TB and how our activities could potentially impact these devastating consequences."

Dr. Mark Hatherill reminded us of the critical importance of unified action, stating, "Profound changes to global health support in recent months make it even more important that TB scientists and stakeholders worldwide unite to commit, invest, and deliver to End TB."



This patient-oriented perspective resonates with other network members. **Dr. Renata Spener-Gomes** suggested enhancing this year's World TB Day theme "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver" by adding a crucial element: care. "By adding 'care,' we emphasize that TB elimination isn't just about policies, funding, and implementation—it's also about compassion and patient-centered approaches."



Global Collaboration for TB Elimination

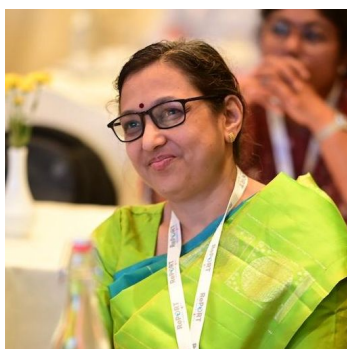


RePORT International's unique position as an international research network brings significant value to tuberculosis research. **Dr. Tim Sterling** highlighted that "RePORT International can continue to perform important epidemiological and translational studies that facilitate improved diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of tuberculosis. The work of RePORT International in eight high-burden countries can improve tuberculosis prevention and care in those countries, but also more broadly."

Dr. Rajita Bhavaraju reinforced this global perspective with a powerful reminder: "A mentor once told me, 'TB anywhere is TB everywhere.' We live in a world where borders exist but not for infectious diseases." She emphasized that, "eliminating TB will require stakeholders working together—funders, researchers, healthcare personnel, and outreach staff—alongside world leaders supporting vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by TB."



Post-Pandemic Challenges and Opportunities



The COVID-19 pandemic created setbacks in the fight against TB. **Dr. Sonali Sarkar** noted that "Post-pandemic, TB is back as the world's leading cause of death from a single infectious agent. Globally, the incident TB cases have risen." Despite these challenges, Dr. Sarkar pointed to promising developments, particularly in India, which contributes to 26% of global TB cases but has demonstrated political will toward elimination.

However, as Dr. Sarkar continued, "The efforts need not only to be sustained but strengthened to be able to produce desired results. Commitment is needed from all stakeholders, governments, funding agencies, and civil society."

Connecting Communities and Research

We asked how RePORT International can help bridge the gap between communities and researchers, especially on commemorative days like World TB Day, particularly through outreach and communication.

"RePORT International is organized to develop new tools, but for these tools to be accepted requires more than just making a diagnostic or current vaccine available" stated Dr. Ellner. "We need programs to adopt effective tools and practices and ensure they reach people at risk of TB and with TB. I think World TB Day is a good time to initiate conversations about how we can make real inroads into understanding the genuine problems faced by persons affected by TB."

Other leaders offered complementary suggestions for community engagement. **Dr. Padmini Salgame** proposed organizing "Virtual symposiums in RePORT member countries and invite researchers working in TB drug development, vaccines, host-directed therapeutics, and clinical trials to present their work to the community." Dr. Salgame believes these forums could "establish open discussions between the researchers and the communities," and help address social determinants to reduce stigma.

Dr. Sterling highlighted the importance of community advisory boards to "help improve communication between community and RePORT investigators" Additionally, Dr. Sarkar emphasized leveraging existing community connections through the "provision of platforms for exchange of information, discussion on the research needs, and understanding of the different perspectives."

Dr. Hatherill echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the role of advocacy: "RePORT International has focused on advancing TB research by partnering with scientists in high-burden countries. A renewed focus on partnering with advocates and community representatives will ensure that these scientific advances meet the needs of TB-affected communities."

Looking to the Future: RePORT in 2026

We finally asked about the future of RePORT International in the next year. Dr. Ellner reflected that "RePORT International is an experiment in studying TB across diverse populations and geographic areas. I believe this experiment has been successful, but the next step will be moving beyond observational cohorts to study interventions such as diagnostics and using implementation science to understand people's acceptance of new tools." He continued "RICC has done a good job defining what we perceive to be the areas of TB research where RePORT International can contribute. Our protocols are up



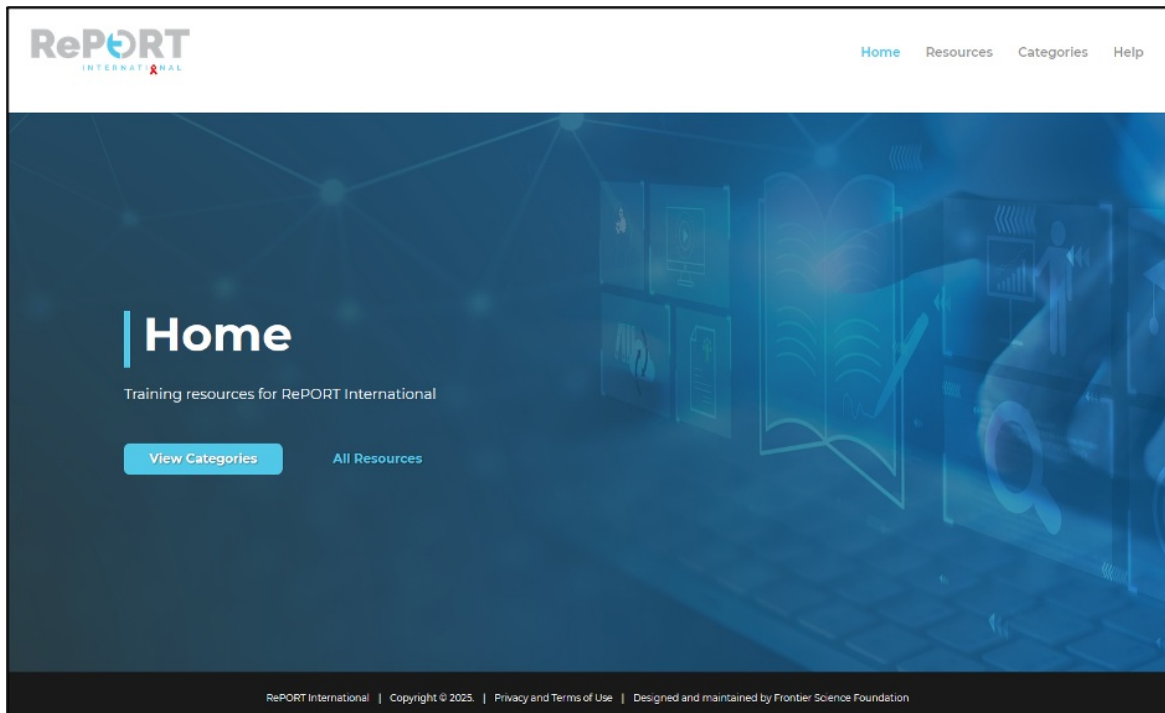
and ready to begin enrollment soon, but we need to look beyond that and ask: What do we do next? How do we ensure we have the greatest impact?"

Dr. Salgame envisions RePORT International providing "a strong and unique platform for researchers from different countries to pool their expertise towards advancing TB research and escalating their endeavors to end the global TB epidemic." She highlighted the multi-consortium TB biomarkers project as "a promising paradigm of how impactful contributions are possible by combining resources, clinical samples, and scientific skills from the member countries."

This feature includes perspectives from Dr. Jerrold Ellner and Dr. Padmini Salgame (Rutgers University/RePORT India), Dr. Mark Hatherill (RePORT South Africa), Dr. Rajita Bhavaraju (Rutgers University), Dr. Renata Spener-Gomes (RePORT Brazil), Dr. Sonali Sarkar (RePORT India), and Dr. Tim Sterling (Vanderbilt University/RePORT Brazil and South Africa).

Written by Daphne Martin, Program Manager, RICC.

VIRTUAL LEARNING ROOM UPDATE



The RePORT International Virtual Learning Room (VLR) has been updated!

The VLR is a space to gather and share a variety of resources relevant to the RePORT International project. With links to recent RePORT network meeting materials such as lectures and presentations, the VLR offers an opportunity to review and catch up on the latest RePORT International gatherings. The VLR also offers a number of valuable resources for clinical and lab staff, including FreezerPro tutorial videos, links to recommended open-source grading and analytics tools, and access to various research study templates. If you are interested in training, the VLR has many opportunities, including webinars, e-learning, and self-paced training, and registration links for various recommended training programs. There have been significant recent upgrades including the ability to download the list of resources to share with others.

Now, with even more opportunities to explore, visit our website to see what we have available. The RePORT Virtual Learning Room is accessible from the main [RePORT International website](#) using the Learning button. If you have research resources, training materials, requests for funding, or feedback to share, please contact us at tbriicc@njms.rutgers.edu.

Reported by Alex Benns, Frontier Science

RECOGNITIONS



Congratulations to RICC post-doctoral fellow **Dr. Felipe Ridolfi** and his mentor, **Dr. Valeria Rolla**, for presenting research at CROI 2025. Dr. Ridolfi was also awarded a CROI Young Investigator Scholarship!

Photo courtesy: Dr. Bob Bollinger

NEW STAFF



Alix Boisson-Walsh, PhD, MSc, is the Associate Director of Special Programs at the Rutgers Center for Emerging Pathogens and Infectious Diseases. She specializes in implementation science, health system strengthening, and infectious disease research in low and middle-income settings.

Dr. Boisson-Walsh provides strategic leadership and technical and fiscal oversight for international clinical research initiatives in infectious diseases and leads the implementation science research endeavors within the group.

[VIEW PROFILE](#)

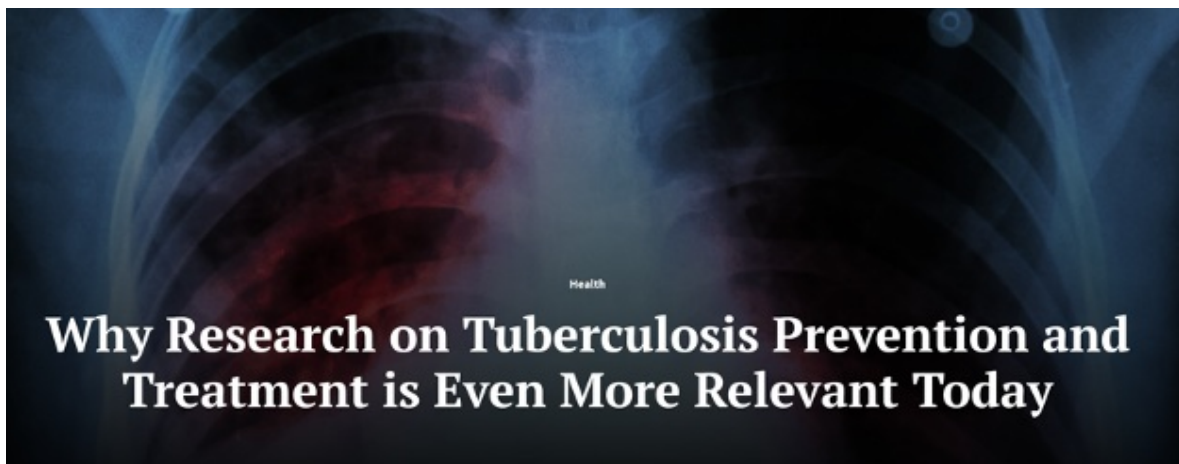
MEDIA & PUBLICATIONS

Commentary

Take a look at this eye-opening commentary about the pros and cons of directly observed therapy from our RePORT Brazil and other collaborators, including persons in the advocacy space.

Beatriz Barreto-Duarte, Klauss Villalva-Serra, Julio Croda, Ricardo A. Arcêncio, Ethel L.N. Maciel, Bruno B. Andrade. Directly observed treatment for tuberculosis care and social support: essential lifeline or outdated burden? The Lancet Regional Health – Americas. (43): March 2025.

[READ MORE](#)



Press Release

Drs. Jerry Ellner and Rajita Bhavaraju were interviewed for a press release, “*Rutgers Health experts discuss the infectious disease and the university’s role in research and treatment.*” It discussed the basics of TB as well as why support for TB programs is so important.

[READ MORE](#)



Global Research Ethics Webinar: Centering Equity and Impact in Global North-South Research Partnerships

RePORT International has been ahead of its counterparts in North-South research collaborations. This Harvard Global Health Coffee Session brought together leading voices in global health research, Bethany Hedt-Gauthier, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Vincent Cubaka, MD, MMed (FM), PhD, Head of Knowledge and Social Medicine Division at Partners In Health, to discuss their global research partnership, touching upon extractive research and exploring what their work looks like on the ground with best practices in decision-making, equity, and maintaining community relevance. Dr. Louise Ivers moderates the conversation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS

REMINDER: Call for Junior Investigator Abstracts Submission Deadline: March 31, 2025

We are continuing to accept abstracts for the upcoming **RePORT International Annual Meeting** scheduled to take place from September 17-19, 2025 in Washington D.C., USA.

[LEARN MORE](#)

This directory includes key personnel at each network site to be used for collaborative research and projects. It can be downloaded via the RePORT website Member Portal.

[VIEW DIRECTORY](#)

The RICC team will start sharing a weekly list of upcoming TB-related educational events, such as webinars and conferences. Look out for an email each week which summarizes upcoming TB events.

Concept Sheet Update

RICC has revised and updated its Concept Sheet for new research concepts. Take a look at it on our website.

[VIEW CONCEPT SHEET](#)

World TB Day Resources

Still planning what to do for World TB Day? Take a look at these resources from the Stop TB Partnership to engage with communities and mobilize advocacy efforts.

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)

REMINDER: Abstract, Presentation, and Manuscript Submissions

With the approaching [Union World Conference on Lung Health](#) and other conferences, as well as the publishing of new research results, please remember to follow your country network's review and approval process. For RICC or RICC-funded activities, abstracts, session proposals, and manuscripts must be passed through the Executive Committee. Please allow two weeks for this review process.

Additionally, concept leads and the primary RePORT country network leading the concept analysis for a given manuscript is responsible for ensuring full compliance with the [US NIH's Public Access Policy](#). This includes ensuring that all grant support is included in submitted manuscripts or reports and publishing or copyright agreements are consistent with funder requirements to submit publications to [PubMed Central](#).

Please remember to follow and subscribe. Don't forget to invite others, both inside and outside of RePORT International to follow our updates!



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