

Worse than COVID19: Millions of deaths expected from other diseases as pandemic crisis sucks resources

Until this year, TB and its deadly allies, H.I.V. and malaria, were on the run. The toll from each disease over the previous decade was at its nadir in 2018, the last year for which data are available.

Yet now, as the coronavirus pandemic spreads around the world, consuming global health resources, these perennially neglected adversaries are making a comeback.

“Covid-19 risks derailing all our efforts and taking us back to where we were 20 years ago,” said Dr. Pedro L. Alonso, the director of the World Health Organization’s global malaria program.

It’s not just that the coronavirus has diverted scientific attention from TB, H.I.V. and malaria. The lockdowns, particularly across parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, have raised insurmountable barriers to patients who must travel to obtain diagnoses or drugs, according to interviews with more than two dozen public health officials, doctors and patients worldwide.

Fear of the coronavirus and the shuttering of clinics have kept away many patients struggling with H.I.V., TB and malaria, while restrictions on air and sea travel have severely limited delivery of medications to the hardest-hit regions.

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“The more you leave undiagnosed and untreated, the more you will have next year and the year after,” said Dr. Lucica Ditiu, who heads the Stop TB Partnership, an international consortium of 1,700 groups fighting the disease.

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