The Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) aims to reduce the transmission of tuberculosis as well as mortality and morbidity from the disease, until it is no longer a major public health problem.

The outcome of any programme is dependent on the role of the key persons involved and their performance. At times, when the programme is more field operation oriented, it is an extremely difficult task for the programme administrators to plan and demarcate individual job responsibilities.

As Ben Boyal rightly put it; “Most plans are just inaccurate predictions”. Hence the necessity or the urge of the key personnel in making the programme a success plays a crucial role as against so called “prescribed methodology”. This may demand the key personnel to don “new avathar” as per the demands of the ground situation.

The Senior Treatment Supervisor (STS) has to assume different roles at different junctures in the RNTCP. He has to play the role of a field worker, treatment organizer, trainer, colleague, subordinate, teacher, health educator, advisor, well wisher, supervisor, etc. While discharging these roles, the STS has to act with simplicity and responsibility. By virtue of his position, he has various roles to play at the Tuberculosis Unit (TU), Microscopic Centres (MC) and Treatment Centres. The expected duties of STS while playing different roles are as follows:

1. **As a field worker**
   - Ensure effective case detection and organize Directly Observed Treatment (DOT) in the TU and MCs after cross verifying the addresses of the patients.
   - Maintain Tuberculosis (TB) Register incorporating the required information in respect of all cases diagnosed in the sub-district.
   - Prepare quarterly report on case detection, sputum conversion, treatment outcome & programme management and send them to District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) after review and approval by the Medical Officer of Treatment Unit (MO-TU).

2. **As an educator**
   - Make certain that the patients are advised properly regarding regularity in treatment completion in the prescribed period, so that they get cured and further spread of infection is prevented. STS for this purpose has to motivate patients appropriately, by understanding their attitude, knowledge and circumstances of the patient. STS’s ability to create awareness among the patients for continuation of treatment amounts to proper motivation.

3. **As a Trainer**
   - Train the staff of health facilities under his jurisdiction to carry out TB control related activities like DOT, retrieval action through home visit, etc.

Provide continuous training to health staff viz., Health Visitors, Staff Nurses, Health Assistants and Multi-purpose Health Supervisors, in carrying out various activities such as:

   i. Make sure the initial home visits to the patients prior to starting treatment and follow-up visits for retrieval of defaulters.

   ii. Discussions with new patients to find out the most convenient location for DOT and continuously educate them regarding the importance of completing the prescribed treatment period.

   III. Ensuring DOT in the intensive phase and providing drugs in the continuation phase with first dose of the week under direct

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observation while the other two doses are self-administered.

iv. Maintenance of treatment cards and see that the follow-up examinations are carried out as per the guidelines.

v. Ascertain that the contacts are suitably examined.

4. As a Captain of the Treatment Section

- Maintain a map of the area detailing all the government health facilities as well as Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which specifically carry out TB activities. The facilities and staff available in these organizations should be listed. The willingness of the identified NGOs to support the TB control programme should be solicited.

5. As a Supervisor

- Supervision of the Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and hospitals in his area, at least once in a month on a systematic basis.

- Ensure that the patients presenting with productive cough of 3 weeks or more duration undergo 3 sputum smear examinations.

- Make certain that the patients are correctly classified and prescribed treatment. The treatment outcome must be indicated on completion of treatment.

- Make sure that the follow up sputum examinations are carried out as prescribed.

- Check the patients randomly and ensure that treatment is carried out accurately as per the guidelines.

- Interviewing the patients at random to ascertain proper entries in the treatment forms which forms an important part of the supervision.

- If supervision is done without the Senior TB Laboratory Supervisor (STLS): Collect information on all parameters of laboratory performance, cross check to see that all sputum smear positive cases are put on treatment, necessary steps taken to trace initial defaulters and bring them back for treatment and inform the MO and STLS about any discrepancies observed in functioning of the laboratory.

- During these supervisory visits, it is important to find out the facts to ascertain why certain laid down procedures are not being followed besides taking possible corrective actions instead of just finding faults.

The supervision should be aimed at helping the workers to carry out their duties in an organized manner and help the patients to complete the treatment successfully. This will be possible if STS acts as a friend, philosopher, guide and teacher by inquiring about the difficulties faced by the workers.

6. As a planner

- Prepare monthly tour programme in advance and see that all the field units are covered at least once in a month & approval obtained from the MO-TC.

- Maintain a diary, record the details of field visits and give feedback to the MO-TC on the observations made.

7. As an organizer

- Maintain regular supply of drugs and other logistics and ensure their uninterrupted availability at all the designated centres in the sub-district.

- Retrieve unconsumed medicine boxes of patients who have defaulted.

- Arrange and facilitate the referring of patients to the District TB Centre or other designated health facilities for drug toxicity and other complications.

On the whole, the STS is expected to be a person with positive attitude which in turn is beneficial to the RNTCP. He fosters teamwork to solve the problems, improves the quality of work, encourages better relationship with other staff and patients, etc.

To conclude, the STS has various roles to play for the success of RNCTP and should have the skills like problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, empathy, self awareness, etc. He is an important link between the health system & the patients besides acting as a co-ordinator between the district level health systems, Primary Health Institutions and the sub-district.