Deadly strain of TB has grown 40 times in 2 yrs

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ultiple drug-resistant (MDR) TB, which has claimed 83 lives in Mumbai this year, including that of 2011 CBSE class XII topper Shreeram Radhakrishnan, is not the only fatal strain of the disease that is stalking Mumbai. There is one even more so, but with a lesser incidence: extremely drug-resistant (XDR) TB, which has killed four in the city and infected 21

The BMC says 1,497 of those who tested positive for MDR-TB have been put on treatment. Additional municipal commissioner (health) Manisha Mhaiskar said there were various reasons why the remaining people were not on treatment. "In all, 106 are from outside Mumbai, 88 are seeking treatment in private hospitals, 68 are not traceable and 135 should be put on treatment in the next two weeks."

According to Mhaiskar. the reason why MDR-TB has grown by 40 times in the last two years is that there has been better detection owing to better diagnostic techniques in the city. "MDR-TB has always been prevalent. But after the introduction of criteria 'C' by the central government, new diagnostic facilities like gene expertise and data collection from all hospitals and laboratories have ensured that there is better diagnosis of the strain," she said.

Criteria 'C' means that any patient suffering from MDR-TB—even those previously on private treatment—can be included under the government-run Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP), which

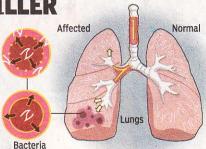
NAILING A SILENT KILLER

TUBERCULOSIS

Disease | Tuberculosis, or TB, is caused by germs that spread from person to person through air. TB usually affects the lungs, but can also affect the brain, kidneys and the spine

Symptoms | Weakness, weight-loss, fever and night sweat. Symptoms of TB of the lungs include coughing, chest pain and coughing up

SUSPECTED POSITIVE TREATED



STRAIN STATUS

MDR-TB

74

345

845

83

A TB patient, if untreated, can infect 10-15 people every

DEATHS

XXDR-TB

- ➤ Hinduja Hospital identified 12 patients who suffered from TB resistant to all drugs
- > WHO later termed this strain extraextensively drug resistant, or XXDR, TB

> Out of the 12,

six died. Of the remaining, four are on treatment in private hospitals and two are under the care of the government-run TB programme

XDR-TB

> 21 people tested positive this year. Four others died before they could be put on treatment

MDR- & XDR-TB

- TB can usually be treated with a course of four standard, or first-line, anti-TB drugs
- If these are misused or mismanaged, multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) can develop. MDR-TB takes longer to treat with second-line drugs, which are more expensive and have more side-effects
- ➤ If these drugs, too, are misused or mismanaged, extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) can develop
- XDR-TB is resistant to first- and secondline drugs, and so treatment options are seriously limited, thus minimizing the chances of cure

ensures free treatment to patients.

But doctors say the city was largely ignorant about MDR-TB till this year. "It was only earlier this year, when the extra-extensively drug resistant (XXDR) TB strain was brought to the notice of the authorities, did the government become alert towards MDR-TB. Prior to this, most doctors tried various drugs and would then come to a conclusion on if the strain was multiple drug-resistant. By

the time the correct treatment was found, the patient would die. What's more, MDR-TB+ cases were hardly reported and deaths would be marked as TB deaths," said a senior chest doctor from a private hospital.