

CONTNEWS

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CONTROL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

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TRIAL UPDATES






CONTROL STUDY DEFINITIVE TRIAL

The CONTROL pilot trial was completed in December 2024, with the last 32-week follow up visit conducted on 24 December 2024. The completion rate for each of the three follow-up visits was more than 70%, with 68 participants completing the 8-week follow-up (86%), 64 participants completing the 24-week follow-up (81%), and 59 participants completing the 32-week follow-up (75%).

The CONTROL definitive trial commenced on November 18, 2024. The target sample size, based on estimates from the pilot trial, is 700, with a recruitment period of nine months. While the number of centers identified for the definitive trial is twelve, a staggered approach is adopted for starting the trial. Recruitment initially commenced at three centers where the pilot trial was already conducted, ensuring that these centers were adequately prepared in terms of staff training and infrastructure. These centers include Khyber Teaching Hospital, Emergency Satellite Hospital Nahaqi in Peshawar, and District Headquarters Hospital in Haripur. Four more centers were added on December 23, 2024 (TB Center Kangra Colony, Civil Hospital Kalabat Township, Alfalah Medical Centre, and Begum Zari TB and Chest Hospital). As of 16 January 2024, 54 patients are recruited in the definitive trial, with four participants having completed their 8-week follow-up.

External monitoring visits at KMU and on-site monitoring visits at various recruitment centers were conducted as part of the ongoing definitive trial. The on-site visits included a visit to Emergency Satellite Hospital Nahaqi, Khyber Teaching Hospital, District Headquarter Hospital, Haripur and Civil Hospital Kalabat. Dr. Zeeshan Kibria (Project Manager), Dr. Shaista Rasool (Postdoctoral Research Fellow), and Dr. Rubab Farooqi (Trial Coordinator), along with other members of the CONTROL team, accompanied Prof Dr.Saeed Farooq on these visits. The monitoring visits confirmed that all aspects of the trial were proceeding satisfactorily, with protocols being followed at each recruitment center.



PROF. SAEED FAROOQ'S MONITORING VISIT TO CONTROL STUDY SITES

Between December 10 and December 30, 2024, Prof. Saeed Farooq, conducted monitoring visits to the Nahaqi TB Centre (December 10), Khyber Teaching Hospital (December 12), DHQ Haripur (December 16), and Civil Hospital Kalabat (December 30). These visits aimed to ensure adherence to study protocols, evaluate the implementation of the CONTROL CBT intervention, and assess the infrastructure and documentation processes.



Civil Hospital Kalabat, Haripur



DHQ Hospital, Haripur



Khyber Teaching Hospital, Peshawar

Monitoring visits included discussions with staff about patient recruitment, referral processes, and operational improvements. Each facility demonstrated strong compliance with regulatory requirements, well-maintained documentation, and robust infrastructure, reinforcing their critical role in advancing the CONTROL study's goals of improving outcomes for depression and tuberculosis.



Nahaqi TB Centre, Peshawar

CONSENSUS WORKSHOP ON REFINING THE CBT INTERVENTION

The Consensus Workshop to refine CONTROL study CBT intervention was organized on October 8, 2024, at the VC Committee Room, KMU. Before the Consensus Workshop, a consultative meeting was held with key stakeholders, including the Project Director of the TB Control Program, DOTS facilitators, the principal investigator, postdoctoral fellows, and Master trainers.

The CONTROL team presented process evaluation findings and proposed refinements to the CBT sessions to ensure they were tailored to TB patients' specific needs. These adjustments were then reviewed at the consensus workshop with a broader group of stakeholders, including mental health specialists and TB patients, to finalize culturally relevant strategies and reach a consensus on the intervention refinements.



KEY OUTCOMES OF CONSENSUS WOKSHOP

- Refinements were made to the content of the intervention based on patient feedback, with specific changes in session duration and homework complexity to make the process easier for participants.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of supporting TB patients who struggle with reading and writing, prompting the introduction of phone-based support for homework completion.
- The inclusion of patient case examples, such as Zarmina and Gul Muhammad, across multiple sessions was finalized, ensuring continuity and engagement for patients

MASTER TRASINER'S SESSION WITH DR. MIRRAT GUL: A STEP TOWARD EXCELLENCE

The CONTROL study master trainers had an interactive session with Dr. Mirrat Gul, co-lead intervention development.



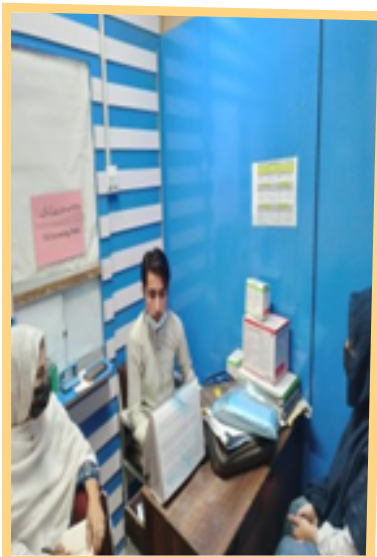
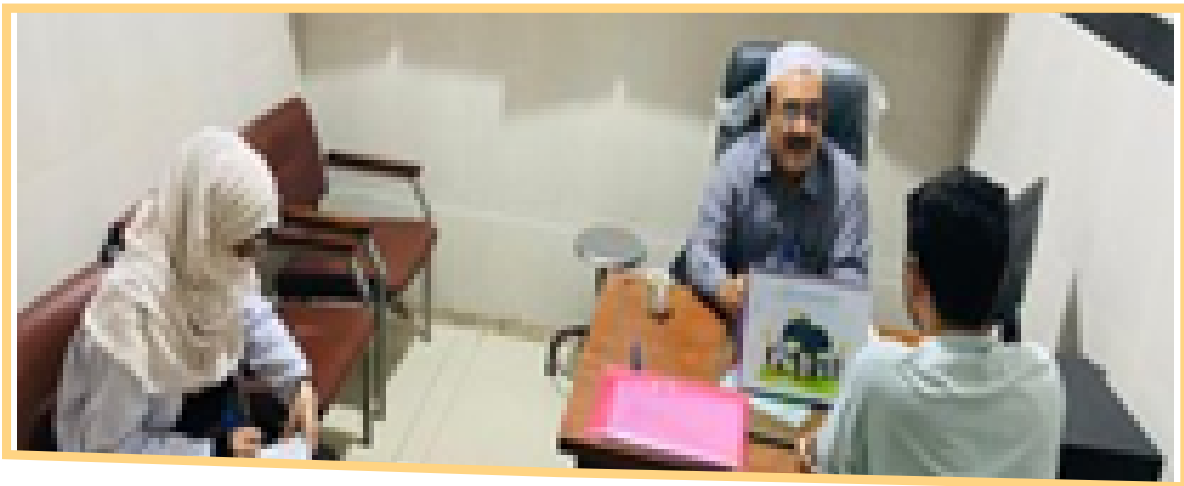
This session centered on enhancing the CBT intervention and equipping participants with essential training strategies for the upcoming TB DOTS training sessions. Engaging discussions and expert insights ensured a strong foundation to further strengthen capacity building master trainers.



Dr. Mirrat Gul appreciated the dedication of all master trainers to refining CBT intervention for definitive trial and developing skills of all TB DOTS facilitator's impactful trainings that continue to pave the way for improved outcomes in TB care and mental health support.

CBT MASTER TRAINERS PROVIDE ON-SITE SUPERVISION AND HANDS-ON PRACTICE FOR DOTS FACILITATORS

CBT master trainers are currently stationed at TB facilities in Haripur and Peshawar, offering invaluable supervision and practical guidance to DOTS facilitators. Their focus is on enhancing the facilitators' proficiency in delivering Sessions 1 and 2 of the CBT training, which cover psychoeducation and behavioral activation. Through hands-on practice, role-playing, and real-time feedback, the master trainers are ensuring that facilitators develop the necessary therapeutic skills to effectively support TB patients experiencing depression. This on-site mentorship is a vital step in strengthening the implementation of the CONTROL program and improving patient outcomes.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



MEET THE SCHOLAR

ABDUL LATIF PH.D. PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOLAR

Abdul Latif is a seasoned public health professional with robust conceptual and technical expertise in institutional management, health systems research, and operational planning for healthcare programs.



He is currently pursuing a PhD in Public Health at Keele University's School of Medicine under the NIHR-funded “CONTROL” project. Holding a master’s degree in health policy and management from Aga Khan University, Pakistan, he has transitioned seamlessly across roles as an academic, program manager, and independent researcher throughout his career.

As a research consultant, Latif has successfully executed diverse assignments for prominent funding agencies, including Oxford Policy Management (OPM), WHO-EMRO, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

His research focuses on tackling health disparities and advancing community-based health interventions through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. With a strong portfolio of peer-reviewed publications on critical public health issues, Latif’s contributions continue to shape meaningful discourse and action in the field.



COMPREHENSIVE 7-DAY TRAINING ENHANCING PROFICIENCY IN DATA COLLECTION, ETHICS, AND TRIAL PROCEDURES

A seven-day training program for the CONTROL trial research assistants was conducted from 2nd to 10th October 2024 at Senate Hall, Khyber Medical University. The purpose of this training was to equip the research team with the essential skills and knowledge needed for the successful implementation of the definitive trial.

The training was facilitated by a team of experts including Dr. Muhammad Firaz, Dr. Amir Aziz, Prof. Dr. Abdul JALil Khan who provided both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience to ensure participants were fully prepared to collect, manage, and analyze data accurately.

Day 1 focused on reiterated the importance of teamwork, accurate data collection, and adherence to the trial protocol. The team was reminded of the significance of their contributions to the trial's success and the broader impact of research on improving patient care.



Days 2 and 3 were dedicated to hands-on training focusing all the data collection tools, allowing participants to explore their functionality in-depth and practice real-world application under expert guidance.

COMPREHENSIVE 7-DAY TRAINING ENHANCES PROFICIENCY IN DATA COLLECTION, ETHICS, AND TRIAL PROCEDURES

Day 4 focused on mastering screening procedures, including the application of the ICD-10 classification system and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Dr. Firaz, Senior Clinical Research Fellow, ensured participants understood the critical importance of accurate and consistent screening.



Day 5 was designed to overview the ethical dimensions of the study, covering topics like confidentiality, informed consent, and the patient information sheet. All the domains of Good Clinical Practice were discussed



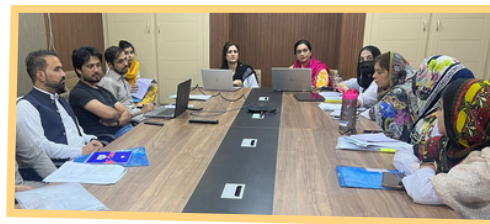
Day 6 highlighted the CONTROL study's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), focusing on data protection, and adverse event management. This session underscored the team's commitment to patient safety and ethical integrity.

Day 7 wrapped up the training by addressing safety procedures, data transfer protocols, and the roles of site coordinators, assessors, and psychologists. This final session emphasized the importance of safeguarding participant data and ensuring smooth communication, marking the culmination of a successful and collaborative learning experience.



COMPREHENSIVE 3-DAY TRAINING ON SITE INITIATION VISIT FOR TRIAL EXCELLENCE

The Site Initiation Visit (SIV) training was conducted from 14th - 16th October 2024 at Khyber Medical University, as part of the preparation for the upcoming CONTROL definitive trial. The training aimed to ensure that the participating sites were well-prepared and fully compliant with the study protocol, ethical standards, and regulatory guidelines.



The three day session was facilitated by Dr. Shaista Rasool (CONTROL Post-doc Fellow) and Dr. Rubab Farooqi (Trial coordinator).

The objectives of the sessions were to review the study protocol and ensure that all sites staff understood their responsibilities, to verify that all site staff were adequately trained on clinical trial procedures and data collection, to confirm compliance with ethical guidelines and regulatory requirements and to enhance the sites' preparedness for participant enrollment and data management.

This training highlighted the importance of continuous learning and collaboration in clinical research and highlighted the commitment of the team to upholding high standards of practice and participant safety.

TRAINING SESSION ON OPEN DATA KIT (ODK) FOR CONTROL STUDY TEAM

Capacity development is an integral component of the CONTROL study as the research team comprised early careers researchers as research assistants, qualitative and quantitative researchers, data input administrators, Master's students, Ph.D. scholars, Post-doc fellows. Developing their knowledge, skills and attitude will in turn would contribute to the quality of project deliverables.

The training session on Open Data Kit (ODK) was held on 17th October 2024 at Khyber Medical University. The purpose of this session was to equip trial staff with essential knowledge and practical skills to use ODK for efficient data collection, management, and analysis. The training is facilitated by Raheel Shahab Khan who covered both theoretical and hands-on aspects, ensuring participants gained a comprehensive understanding of ODK's features and applications.



Participants were guided to the step-by-step process of creating and entering data collection forms in ODK, designing forms using the ODK build tool, including adding various question types such as text fields, multiple-choice questions, and numeric fields.

The session covered advanced features like conditional logic, cascading selects, and media attachments (e.g., images, videos, and audio files). Additionally, the process of uploading these forms to the ODK Aggregate server or Google Drive for deployment was explained.

TRANSFORMING TB CARE: A COMPREHENSIVE 6-DAY CONTROL CBT TRAINING FOR DOTS FACILITATORS

The 6-day training on the CONTROL CBT intervention for DOTS facilitators, held from 18th to 26th October 2024, was a transformative journey designed to enhance TB and depression care through culturally tailored mental health support.

Day 1 was all about introducing the CONTROL intervention and CBT principles, the structure of intervention sessions, and resources like handbooks, flipbooks, and videos.

Day 2 & 3 focused on Psychoeducation, Behavioral Activation and Motivational Interviewing followed by hands-on activities, and roleplaying in Urdu and Pashto.



On **Day 4, 5 & 6**, Cognitive Restructuring, Challenging & Alternative thoughts and Problem-solving was focused.



HONORING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF TOP PERFORMERS IN CBT TRAINING

The six-day CBT training for DOT facilitators concluded with the recognition of outstanding participants.

Each day, a 'Participant of the Day' was honored for exceptional performance, active engagement, and commitment to learning. These individuals set an inspiring example for their peers, highlighting the collective effort to enhance mental health support for TB patients and paving the way for impactful and compassionate care.



PROVINCIAL TB PROGRAM MEDICAL OFFICERS TRAINING ON MHGAP

The Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) workshop for Medical Officers from the Provincial TB Control Program, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held on November 27, and December 17, 2024, at the Khyber Medical University. The workshop aimed to improve the mental health assessment and management skills of medical officers working in TB control, ultimately enhancing patient outcomes



Dr. Muhammad Firaz, and Dr. Aamir Aziz, conducted sessions focused on screening, diagnosis and management of anxiety and depression in TB patients. The session explored physical, psychological, and pharmacological interventions, providing MOs with practical tools to assess and address the mental health needs of their patients.



The medical officers during the discussion and feedback session highlighted the essential role of mhGAP training and interventions in enhancing mental health care. They strongly advocated for the inclusion of mental health counselling as a critical component in patient care, recognizing it as a key factor in improving overall mental well-being. According to their feedback, the combination of counselling, mhGAP, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions has led to notable improvements in patients' mental health conditions.

EMPOWERING DOT FACILITATORS WITH ENHANCED CBT SKILLS: FIVE-DAY REFRESHER TRAINING

The Five-Day Refresher Training program for DOTs, focusing on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), was scheduled for November 14th, 15th, 16th, 22nd, and 23rd, 2024. The primary objective was to provide participants with a comprehensive review of the sessions, revisiting and reinforcing the learning from the previous DOTs training on CBT. CBT Master Trainers guided participants through six sessions, covering topics including Psychoeducation and Behavioral Activation (Session 1), Motivational Interviewing (Session 2), Cognitive Restructuring and Recognizing Thoughts (Session 3), Challenging Thoughts (Session 4), Alternative Thoughts (Session 5), and Problem-Solving (Session 6). This structured approach aimed to ensure a deeper understanding of each session.

The clinical research fellow, Dr. Amir Aziz and CBT master trainers actively provided constructive feedback, enhancing participants' comprehension of CBT principles.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



ART FOR IMPACT: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CREATIONS FOR TB AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

A cornerstone of the CONTROL study's community engagement initiative and NIHR CEI Guiding Principles Pilot Project titled “**Art for Impact: Community-Driven Creations for TB and Mental Health Awareness**” was its commitment to listening and projecting community voices and working closely with community members to co-create, design, and deliver TB and mental health awareness messages using community-selected art genres that align with the local culture.

Establishing trust was foundational so separate male and female community engagement sessions respected local cultural norms, creating safe spaces for open dialogue. Transparency was a recurring theme, with community representatives actively involved in decision-making, including the co-creation workshops.

The highlight of the co-creation workshop was that community members took ownership and led the discussion guiding the CEI team regarding the final medium, content, language, duration, and mode of delivery. An animated video titled “Gul Makkai ke Kahani” was developed. Community-driven design of storyboards, taglines, and characters for awareness videos reflected a balanced power dynamic.



SOFT LAUNCH OF GUL MAKKAI KE KAHANI; COMMUNITY DRIVEN AWARENESS VIDEO

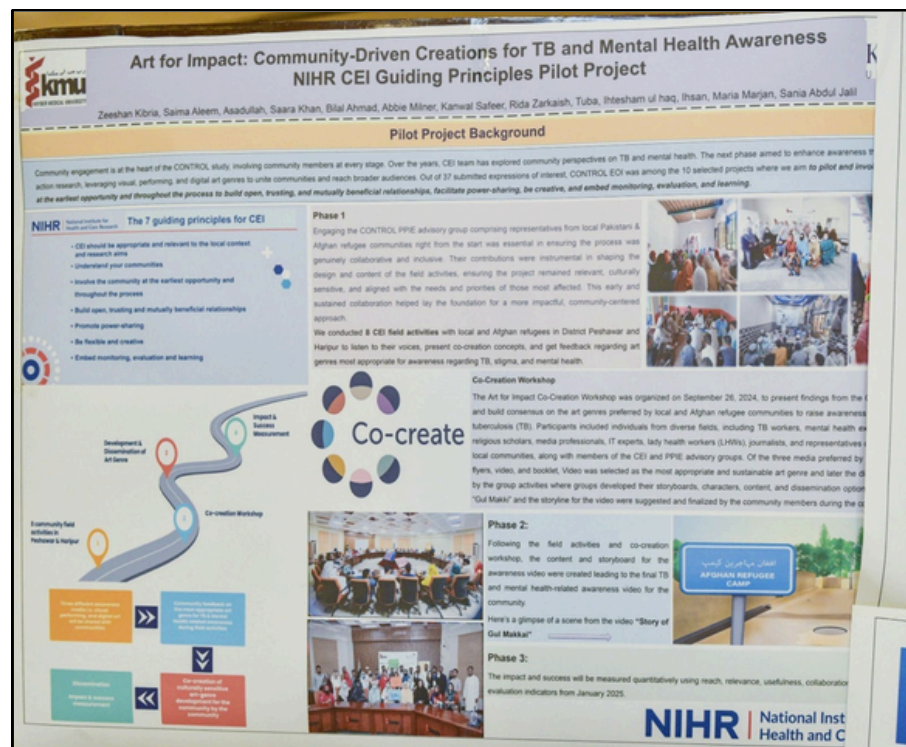
A key moment for the NIHR CEI Guiding Principles Pilot Project team was the soft launch of the Art for Impact community awareness video “Gul Makkai ke Kahani”, on 5th December 2024 during the Global Mental Health Symposium, held in Islamabad.

Prof. Saeed Farooq, Dr. Zohaib Khan, and Dr. Zeeshan Kibria joined the team to officially unveil the video. The video is available on CONTROL Youtube Channel in both Urdu and Pashto language with English subtitles.



ART FOR IMPACT PROJECT POSTER PRESENTATION

During the GMH Symposium 4-5 December 2024, pilot project poster was also presented by the co-lead Dr. Zeeshan Kibria. The poster showcased the journey of the pilot project spread across its three work packages.



GUL MAKKAI KE KAHANI SHOWCASING TO LADY HEALTH WORKERS IN HARIPUR

On December 13, 2024, a community engagement activity was held in Khalabat, located in the Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The primary objective of the activity was to showcase the CEI video to Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and community members, providing an opportunity for them to share their feedback as they were part of the video content development process.

20 Lady Health workers (LHW), a Lady Health Supervisor (LHS), and an Islamic scholar (a teacher from the Madrassa) attended the session.



Lady Health Supervisor stated, *“Today, your project has honored the incredible work of our Lady Health Workers by dedicating a character representing us in this video. We are the unsung heroes ensuring healthier futures for families, one step at a time. Through this video, we will be able to empower the community with knowledge about TB and mental and also about the free treatments available at TB facilities”*.

The team then shared the video link with all the participants, and they all downloaded the video to their cell phones ensuring that during their door-to-door community visits, they will educate the community members via this video

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM DECEMBER 4-5, 2024, ISLAMABAD



THE CONTROL PROGRAM GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium on Global Mental Health, held on the 4th and 5th of December 2024 at Ramada Hotel, Islamabad, was a landmark event that brought together leading experts, researchers, academics and professionals to address critical issues in mental health and advance global health initiatives. The event was co-chaired by Prof. Zia Ul Haq, Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University (KMU), and Prof. Antonius Raghubansie, Pro Vice-Chancellor International, Keele University.

The event was organized by the Control Team in collaboration with KMU and Keele University, and aimed to foster collaboration in healthcare research and training, particularly in reducing disparities and improving health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), as well as capacity development. The event featured a series of thought-provoking sessions, beginning with Prof. Saeed Farooq discussing the importance of collaboration for equitable healthcare research and training, underscoring the importance of partnerships in addressing healthcare inequities. This was followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Keele and KMU, for the launch of a joint-sup



THE CONTROL PROGRAM GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM DECEMBER 4-5, 2024, ISLAMABAD

Another critical focus of the symposium was the experience-sharing by world-renowned academics for improving health outcomes in non-communicable diseases in LMICs, with strategies emphasizing scalable and sustainable interventions. Prof. Kara Hanson, Director of the National Institute for Healthcare and Research (NIHR) UK, in her keynote talk, highlighted the portfolio of global health funding schemes and shared the strategic vision of the Institute for fostering global health research. Prof. Athula from Sri Lanka discussed the importance of ethical conduct in global health research in the context of LMICs. Prof. Tom Kingstone provided insights into the capacity development aspects of global health research and their importance for sustainable partnerships.

The event also showcased the active global mental health projects led by Prof. Saeed Farooq in collaboration with investigators from KMU. Findings from the “HOPE” project, the launch of the “TRANSLATE” project, and updates from the “CONTROL” programme, were shared and discussed at length. CEI leads also presented the Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) aspects of these and other global health research projects. The CONTROL team officially launched a video on CEI, which was an output from a pilot project awarded by NIHR to the CONTROL team and highlights the importance of using art in effective community engagement. The symposium also provided a platform for the PhD students enrolled at Keele under the KMU-Keele Joint Supervision programme funded by the CONTROL programme to share their progress with the audience.



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