

July - September 2025

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3



# CONTNEWS

THE QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER OF THE  
CONTROL RESEARCH  
PROGRAMME



# TRIAL UPDATES



# CONTROL DEFINITIVE TRIAL UPDATE

The CONTROL trial made strong progress in third Quarter 2025, with steady recruitment, follow up, and monitoring across all sites. Notably, four new recruitment centers were added DTO Clinic in Abbottabad and Mardan, along with DS TB MMC and MDR TB MMC Mardan to accelerate participant enrollment and enhance recruitment efficiency.

By September 30, 2025, the trial had successfully enrolled 413 participants, with recruitment evenly distributed across both trial arms. Follow-up progress remained on track, with 264 participants completing their 8-week assessments, 119 reaching the 24-week milestone, and 75 participants successfully completing the 32-week follow-up.

These milestones highlight the team's dedication to sustaining the trial's progress while ensuring high quality data collection. Regular internal and external monitoring visits were carried out as part of the trial's stringent oversight processes, focusing on maintaining protocol compliance and reinforcing quality standards across all sites.

External monitoring visits were carried out throughout the quarter to ensure the trial's quality and adherence to protocols. On July 22, 2025, Dr. Naveed Afzal conducted a visit to Prime Hospital, followed by a visit to RHC Nahaqi on August 18, 2025. Dr. Afzal also Visited DHQ Hospital on August 26, 2025, and Kuwait Teaching Hospital on August 29, 2025. On the same day, KTH was also visited by Dr. Afzal.





# CONTROL DEFINITIVE TRIAL UPDATE

Later, on September 16, 2025, a visit to KMU was conducted by Dr. Naveed Afzal and Dr. Syed Imran Gillani. Finally, on September 26, 2025, Alfalah and Gunj sites were visited by Dr. Afzal. Throughout all these visits, the external monitors were accompanied by the dedicated trial team, including Dr. Shaista Rasool, Dr. Rubab Farooqi, Ms. Zarmina Fahim, and Dr. Asma Habib. Internal monitoring visits were conducted to the following centers: Al Khidmat Hospital on July 22, 2025, DTO Clinic Abbottabad on August 29, 2025, MMC DS-TB and DTO Mardan on August 13, 2025, and MDR Mardan Medical Complex on October 1, 2025, by the monitoring team.

These visits confirmed the trial's satisfactory progress and adherence to study protocols at all KMU affiliated centers. The dedication of site teams and monitors has been crucial in maintaining high quality operations and safeguarding the integrity of the research.





# External Monitoring Visits to TB Centres in Haripur & Peshawar



External monitoring visits were conducted across July and August to ensure quality and compliance in the CONTROL definitive trial. On 22 July 2025 and 18 August 2025, Dr. Syed Imran Gilani (Assistant Professor, SBDC) visited TB centres in Haripur, accompanied by Dr. Shaista Rasool (Post-Doctoral Research Fellow & Trial Lead) and the trial monitoring team. On 22 July and 29 August 2025, Dr. Naveed Afzal Khan (Assistant Professor, KGMC) led monitoring visits to Kuwait Teaching Hospital , Prime Hospital, and Khyber Teaching Hospital in Peshawar, joined by Dr. Shaista Rasool , Dr. Rubab Farooqi (Trial Coordinator), and Dr. Asma Habib (Data Monitoring Team). These visits focused on reviewing site preparedness, verifying documentation, ensuring compliance with study protocols, and addressing areas highlighted in earlier assessments, reinforcing the commitment to trial integrity and participant safety.

# Internal Monitoring Visit

On 26 August 2025, our internal monitoring team visited the DTO Clinic Abbottabad as part of the CONTROL program. The visit was led by Dr. Shaista Rasool along with Dr. Asma Habib.

The team was warmly welcomed by Dr. Somia Amin (Site Coordinator), Ms. Bushra Shah (Assessor/Research Assistant), and Ms. Sundus Bibi (Psychologist). Together, they reviewed how the site is carrying out patient recruitment, documentation, blinding procedures, and overall study flow.

During the visit, the monitors took a close look at the Investigator Site File (ISF), checked Case Report Forms at different study stages, and observed both a screening session and a CBT session in action. These real-time observations gave the team valuable insights into daily operations and how participant confidentiality is being maintained.





# Refresher Training Strengthened Practical Skills of DOTS Facilitators

21st, 22nd, and 23rd July 2025 A three-day refresher training brought together DOTS facilitators from RHC Nahaqi and TB facilities in Mardan and Abbottabad. The program gave DOTS facilitators the chance to revisit their responsibilities through interactive discussions and collaborative activities.

With a strong focus on hands-on roleplays, the sessions helped participants sharpen their communication, problem-solving, and patient-care skills.

These practical exercises not only boosted confidence but also prepared facilitators to deliver more effective TB services in their communities.

DOTS facilitators were appreciated for their exceptional performance in pre-screening and CBT session delivery. The recognition concluded with a group photograph, celebrating the team's dedication and commitment to strengthening TB care.



PARTICIPANT OF THE DAY		
DAY's	PHQ-2	SESSION
DAY 1	MUNAWAR	AFAQ
DAY 2	ARSHAD	MUNAWAR
DAY 3	MUDASIR	MUNAWAR



# Strengthening Capacity Through Refresher Training

A refresher training was conducted for the CONTROL-NIHR trial team, including site coordinators, psychologists, and assessors. The session reviewed trial progress and provided a platform to discuss ongoing challenges, ensuring smooth implementation and strengthened teamwork.



## Farewell to Saima Sheikh CONTROL Programme Manager (UK)

The CONTROL-NIHR team in both the UK and Pakistan came together to bid farewell to Saima Sheikh, Programme Manager (UK). Her dedication, professionalism, and warmth have been invaluable to the project and will be deeply missed. The team wished her the very best in her next chapter.



# Process Evaluation

The CONTROL project has advanced its process evaluation with a strong focus on quality and learning. Four independent CBT experts were trained to assess therapy session recordings using standardized tools, while the process evaluation team completed three training sessions to sharpen skills in using both quantitative and qualitative instruments.

By July 2025, fieldwork was underway. A random sample of 31 survey participants was selected, with 18 intervention patients already completing post-eight-week surveys. Ten semi-structured interviews (SSIs) have been conducted with intervention patients, one with a non-completer, and six with control patients, alongside ten participant surveys.

Looking ahead, the team aims to finish data collection by November 2025, hold a focus group discussion with trial staff, and present interim findings in Sri Lanka this December. These steps will ensure that the evaluation captures both the fidelity of CBT delivery and the lived experiences of patients.





# Theory of Change Workshop Engaged TB Patients and Caregivers

Voices of patients and caregivers took center stage as the CONTROL team created a safe and interactive space to explore the role of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in TB treatment. Facilitated by Maryam Rahim, the participatory workshop held on 2 July 2025 encouraged open dialogue, personal testimonies, and hands-on activities such as sticky-note feedback.



Through these exchanges, participants shed light on the many barriers they face in accessing and sustaining CBT: logistical hurdles like time and travel, emotional challenges such as stigma and stress, and limited awareness in the community about mental health. Alongside these challenges, they also offered constructive suggestions, including flexible scheduling, community-based delivery options, and greater involvement of family members in therapy to provide more holistic support.



By capturing these lived experiences, the workshop laid the foundation for a Theory of Change (ToC) that reflects the real priorities of service users. This process ensures the CONTROL program's intervention model is refined to be practical, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of patients and their caregivers.



# Theory of Change Workshop with TB Patients in Haripur

A Theory of Change (ToC) workshop was held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025 with TB patients in Haripur, facilitated by Dr. Shaista Rasool, Maryiam Rahim, Aiman Niaz, and Savera. The session aimed to gather patient insights and co-develop impact pathways for strengthening TB care.



## Orientation about CONTROL Study at ToC Workshop

A Theory of Change (ToC) workshop was held on 14 July at KMU with TB managers, Medical Officers, and DOTS facilitators. Dr. Zeeshan Kibria delivered an orientation on the CONTROL-NIHR study, highlighting key findings from the pilot and sharing updates on the definitive trial. The session provided valuable insights to strengthen planning and delivery of TB care interventions.



# Theory of Change Workshop Strengthened Planning for TB Care

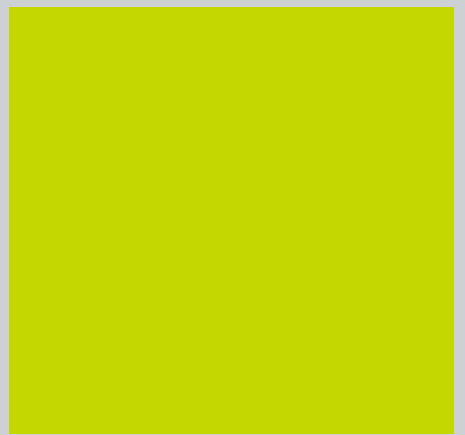
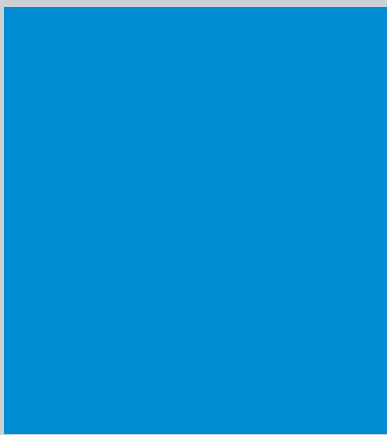
Maryiam Rahim introduced the concept of ToC and its purpose for the activity, while Dr. Shaista Rasool presented Work Package 4 of the CONTROL-NIHR study, emphasizing the scale-up of the intervention and the roles of key stakeholders. As the CONTROL intervention centered on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dr. Aamir Aziz shared insights into culturally adapted CBT, underscoring its relevance in the local context.



In addition, Dr. Aamir Aziz and Saara Khan facilitated an engaging session with DOTS facilitators while Dr. Fayaz Ahmad and Dr. Shaista Rasool facilitated the session with TB managers and Medical Officers from Peshawar and Haripur, mapping assumptions, enablers, and challenges for integrating mental health into TB care



# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT





# Meet the PhD Scholar Aliya Durrani



Aliya Durrani is a PhD Scholar in Public Health at the School of Medicine, Keele University, United Kingdom. Her research focuses on maternal health, with a particular emphasis on maternal mental health. She holds a Master's degree in Public Health, which she completed with distinction at Khyber Medical University (KMU), Pakistan.

With a strong foundation in quantitative research methods, Aliya has supervised numerous research projects and contributed to several peer-reviewed publications. Her academic journey reflects a consistent commitment to advancing women's health, especially in under-resourced contexts.



# Three-Day Grand Refresher Training on CBT for TBHWs



A three-day Grand Refresher Training on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was successfully conducted for TB Health Workers (TBHWs) on 11th, 12th, and 13th September 2025.

On Day 1, the focus was on administering the pre-screening tool and practicing CBT Sessions 1 and 2, which helped strengthen TBHWs' therapeutic and communication skills. Day 2 featured interactive roleplays in Hindko, Pashto, and Urdu, allowing participants to practice culturally adapted CBT. TBHWs also delivered presentations to enhance their confidence, clarity, and time management skills. Day 3, the final day, was dedicated to practicing CBT Sessions 5 and 6, with each roleplay followed by constructive feedback from the Clinical Research Fellow, CBT Master Trainers, and peers.





# Celebrating Achievements

Therapist of the Day” winners were recognized with certificates during the three-day CBT refresher training. The event concluded with a vote of thanks, certificate distribution to TBHWs, and a memorable group photo.



## Orientation for Independent Evaluators on CaCBT & CBT Assessment tools



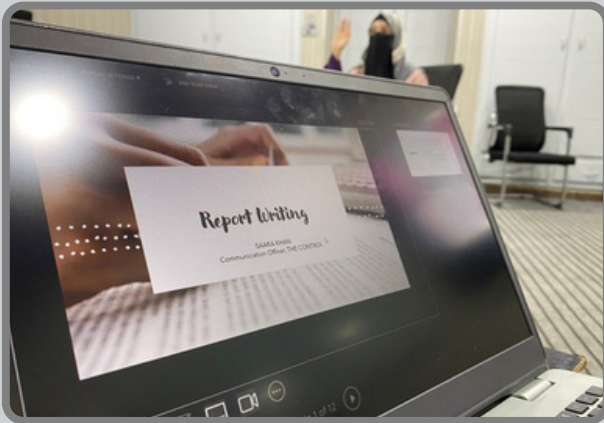
On 20th September 2025, Saara Khan conducted an orientation session for the newly hired Independent Evaluators. The session provided a comprehensive overview of the study, the CaCBT intervention, and the CBT assessment tools to be used for process evaluation.

Importantly, it also highlighted the evaluators' role in maintaining objectivity and ensuring quality work. By the end, the team felt equipped with the knowledge and confidence to support the trial effectively.



# Report Writing Training for CONTROL Staff

To strengthen communication and documentation, CONTROL writing staff received training in report writing on 25 July 2025, led by Saara Khan. The session focused on building effective reporting skills to enhance clarity and quality in project outputs.

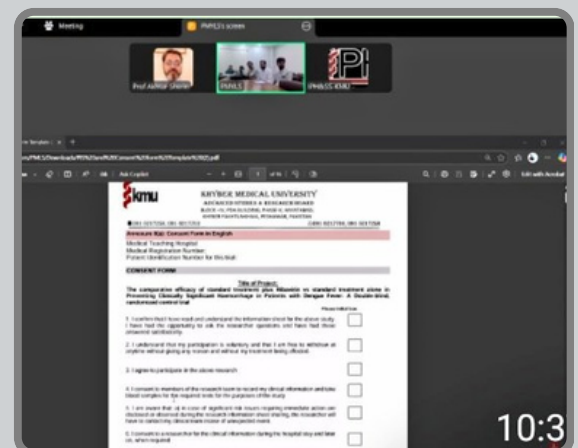


## New CONTROL Staff Trained in Good Clinical Practice



Upholding ethical and quality standards is central to the CONTROL-NIHR trial. On 2 August 2025, newly hired staff participated in a Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training led by Prof. Akhtar Sherin, Dr. Shabbir, and Mr. Saleem.

The session focused on international research standards, ethical compliance, and data quality, ensuring the team is well-prepared to maintain excellence in trial implementation.



# Site Initiation Visit (SIV) Training for CONTROL Staff

On 29 July 2025, newly appointed research assistants received Site Initiation Visit (SIV) training at the ORIC CEI Room, facilitated by Dr. Shaista Rasool and Dr. Rubab Farooqi. The training prepared staff for their responsibilities in the upcoming clinical trial, focusing on study protocol adherence, Good Clinical Practice (GCP), ethical guidelines, patient enrollment, data management, and adverse event reporting.

Through interactive discussions, role-playing, and hands-on practice with the Electronic Data Capture (EDC) system, participants gained the knowledge and skills required to ensure trial readiness and safeguard data quality.

## Hands-On Training Boosted Skills in ODK Data Collection

On 7 July 2025, the team participated in a hands-on practice session on Open Data Kit (ODK). The training focused on building skills to efficiently collect and manage data, enabling real-time insights from the field.





# Refresher Training Strengthened Field Team's Protocol Adherence



On 2 July 2025, a refresher training was conducted for the CONTROL NIHR trial field team, focusing on eligibility, inclusion, and exclusion criteria. The session aimed to strengthen the team's understanding and ensure accurate participant recruitment while maintaining full adherence to the study protocol.

## Two-Day Training Enhanced Field Staff's Qualitative Research Skills



On 2 July 2025, a two-day training was held for newly hired field staff on the use of qualitative tools by Dr. Aamir Aziz. The sessions were designed to strengthen data collection skills and ensure high-quality implementation across project activities.



# Workshop on SOPs to Enhance Research Quality

A workshop on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was conducted for the research team on 7th July 2025, led by Dr. Shaista Rasool and Dr. Rubab Farooqi. The session focused on strengthening research quality by providing clear guidelines and standardized protocols, ensuring that all team members are aligned in maintaining consistency and accuracy throughout the trial.



## Virtual Training for Medical Officers on CONTROL Study and mhGAP

Medical Officers from TB facilities in Abbottabad and Mardan received virtual training on the CONTROL study, mhGAP, and the trial process. The sessions were led by Dr. Aamir Aziz, Dr. Rubab Farooqi, and Hessam ul Haq, equipping participants with essential knowledge to strengthen the integration of mental health into TB care.





# Six-Day CBT Training for TB Health Workers

A Six-day Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) training for TB Health Workers (TBHWs) from Abbottabad and Mardan was held on 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th July 2025. Facilitated by Saara Khan, Faryal Fazal, and Zumar Malik, the program combined theory with practical roleplays to strengthen skills in psychoeducation, behavioural activation, motivational interviewing, and recognizing the connection between thoughts, emotions, and physical symptoms.

By the end of the training, TBHWs were equipped with practical CBT tools to better integrate mental health care into TB services, ensuring a more holistic approach to patient wellbeing.



## Onsite CBT Training Rolled Out in TB Centers Mardan, Abbottabad, and Nahaqi

Following the completion of the six-day CBT training, CBT Master Trainers conducted a three-day onsite training at MMC Hospital and DTO Clinics in Mardan and Abbottabad, as well as at RHC Nahaqi. The sessions focused on practical implementation, enabling participants to apply their learning directly in clinical settings.



# PhD Scholars' Progress and Training Highlights

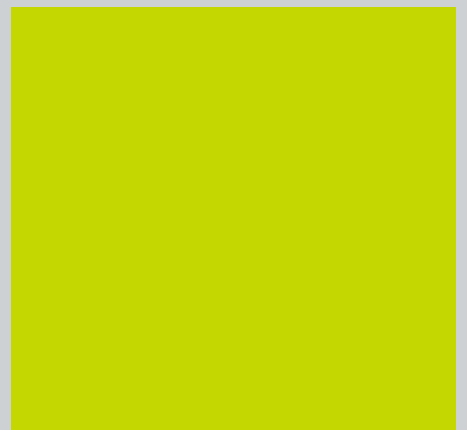
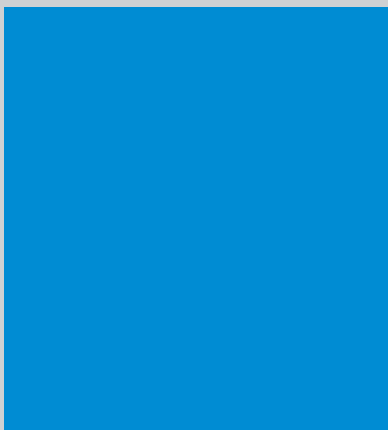
The PhD scholar attended the online NIHR Doctoral Research Training Camp on “Applying for Further Funding” in July 2025, gaining valuable insights into grant applications and future research opportunities.

During this quarter, all PhD scholars participated in their second progress review, where they presented updates on their projects, outlined future timelines, and engaged in discussions with their supervisory teams. In this reporting period, both PhD students and supervisors submitted progress review reports through Skills Forge to update the PGR system.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE



# Art for Impact Showcased at NIHR CEI Guiding Principles Launch

CONTROL study pilot project “Art for Impact” was selected for global showcasing at the NIHR CEI Guiding Principles Launch Webinar – Session 1, held on 15 July 2025. Representing the project from Asia, Dr. Saima Aleem presented the project, sharing its vision and journey with a global audience.



Adding further depth, Dr. Zeeshan Kibria, Programme Manager at CONTROL and Co-Lead of Art for Impact, joined the esteemed panel to highlight key learnings and outcomes from the pilot project.





# CEI Team Engaged with Afghan Commissionerate for Refugees

On 25 July 2025, the CEI team met with Chief Commissioner Shakeel Safi of the Afghan Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees to discuss upcoming CEI activities planned in refugee camps. The meeting provided an opportunity to share project objectives, explore areas of collaboration, and highlight the importance of engaging refugee communities in shaping health initiatives. Discussions emphasized strengthening awareness around TB and mental health, building trust with community members, and ensuring that activities are responsive to the unique challenges faced by Afghan refugees. This collaboration sets the stage for impactful, community-driven efforts to advance health and well-being among refugee populations.



# CONTROL CEI Presented at KMU Collaborative Meeting

On 05 August 2025, CONTROL CEI team led by Saara Khan participated in the CEI Collaborative Meeting at Khyber Medical University. She shared how the project has been connecting with communities, the challenges faced, and the lessons learned along the way. The room was filled with experiences from other NIHR projects as well, each sharing its own story of partnership and engagement. Together, these discussions created a lively space for knowledge sharing, inspiration, and collaboration, reinforcing how CEI is shaping the future of health research in the region.





# Strengthening TB & Mental Health Awareness with Lady Health Workers in Mardan and Abbottabad

In Mardan, the CEI team came together with Lady Health Workers (LHWs) on 11 September 2025, to recognize their vital role as trusted health providers in the community. The discussion centered on how LHWs are making a difference in raising awareness about TB and mental health.

To deepen the conversation, the team shared the CEI video “Gul Makai Ki Kahani”, which brought powerful messages of awareness and support to life. The session highlighted not only the dedication of LHWs but also the strength of community voices in shaping healthier futures. The video was shared with the participants so they can use it for community awareness in their routine practices.





Abbottabad became the next stop for the awareness campaign on TB and mental health, where a CEI activity on 20 September 2025 brought together Lady Health Workers (LHWs), Lady Health Visitors (LHVs), and Lady Health Supervisors (LHSs).

The participants shared stories from their daily work, reflecting on the challenges of raising awareness in their communities. Together, they explored practical strategies for early detection, patient support, and culturally sensitive communication.

What stood out most was their commitment, the voices of frontline health providers underscored how vital they are in shaping community behavior, encouraging people to seek care, and making public health initiatives truly work on the ground. The CONTROL CEI team share the awareness material with them so the message can reach masses.

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# Community Engagement and Perspectives on TB and Mental Health: Experiences from Mardan and Abbottabad

In Mardan Sheri Behlol village, a CEI activity held on 13 September 2025 brought the community together in separate sessions for men and women. PPIE advisory members actively joined the discussions, helping to create a safe and open space where participants could share their views and experiences.

The conversations centered on TB, MDR-TB, and mental health, with community members not only learning more about these issues but also voicing the challenges they face in everyday life. Many participants suggested ways to improve awareness and support within their neighborhoods, ensuring that local perspectives will guide future CEI activities and make them more effective



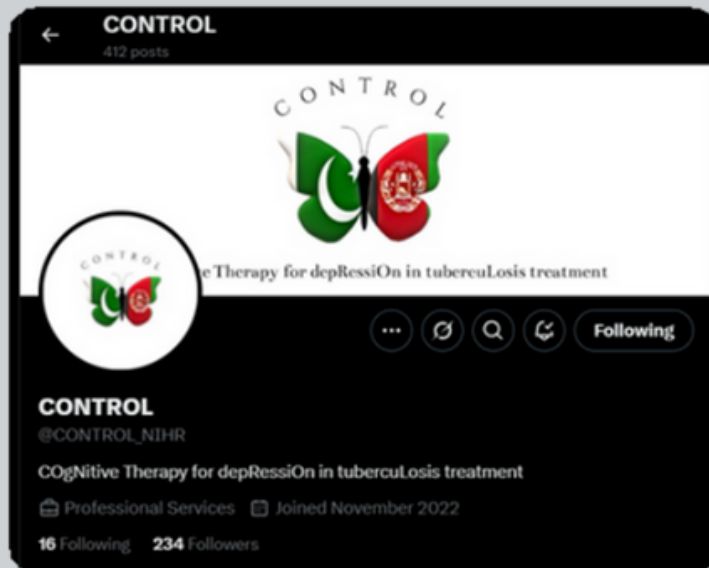
On 20 September 2025, a Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) session was held in Silhat, Abbottabad, bringing together local community members to share their perspectives on tuberculosis (TB) and mental health. The session was based on discussions to create an open and interactive space where participants could express their experiences, concerns, and ideas.

The conversations revealed both challenges and opportunities, providing valuable insights into how awareness and care can be strengthened at the community level. This feedback will play a crucial role in shaping future CEI activities to ensure they are more responsive, inclusive, and aligned with community needs.





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