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## 2. MUM AND GOU THE TB STAR

As a mother, there's nothing more concerning than seeing your child unwell. My heart sank the moment I noticed my little girl, Gou, with swollen glands. My initial fear? Tonsillitis—"Not again!" This year has been a whirlwind of coughs, COVID, colds, and a constant stream of visiting sick house guests, turning every sniffle into a potential alarm.

My mind raced to cool her fever, but let's pause for a moment. I'm Teresa, a health extension officer at the Businesses for Health: TB & HIV project. My role is to empower workplaces and their TB wardens to recognise early signs of TB and ensure that businesses educate their teams on the importance of early TB detection. We directly address the fears surrounding TB and HIV, including stigma, treatment costs, and job security concerns that often stops people from seeking the help they urgently need.

However, today, I'm not just Teresa from Businesses for Health; I'm a mother worried about her four-year-old daughter, Gou, who's unwell and lethargic.

The week was set to be especially hectic, filled with a training course for workplace TB wardens and managing a complex case of drug-resistant TB at a workplace. The patient had vanished out of fear, leaving his employer anxious and stressed. Now, I also had a sick child to care for.

With my health system contacts, we were confident we could locate the missing TB patient and reassure him and his boss. Yet, my professional challenges paled in comparison to my personal worries when Monday arrived, and Gou showed no signs of improvement.

In a moment of self-doubt, I questioned my judgment. Having dealt with TB patients for years and cared for relatives with TB at home, how could I overlook the possibility that my own daughter might face the same threat? The fear of neglecting my child's health was overwhelming. Thankfully, Gou had received her BCG vaccination as a baby, offering me some comfort that she was protected against the most severe forms of TB.

Gou was not coughing, so not infectious, which allowed me to plan a day that included work and a clinic visit for the whole family. At the clinic, our friend Sr. Freda examined all of us, took a fluid sample from Gou's swollen gland, and led her to the on-site X-ray machine at Lawes Road. Afterward, Gou, her sister, and I went to work. There, the once sick and shy Gou turned into a star, eagerly showing the trainees how a fine needle aspiration is performed. She engaged them in creating workplace TB awareness posters, displaying bravery and confidence that took me by surprise.

The next day, a wave of relief washed over me with the news that Gou's TB tests were negative. As a health worker and a mother, confident in managing health crises, we can still sometimes overlook the obvious. Gou's situation turned out okay, but feeling guilty about delaying a check for TB was a lesson for me and a reminder for everyone. When concerned about TB, please act quickly.

The fun part of this story was seeing my little star, Gou, confidently helping our workplace TB wardens in devising educational strategies for their peers. This made me prouder than ever. Enjoy her starring in the posters below.

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## KEY POINTS

1. **Early Detection of TB Signs:** despite her professional experience with TB, Teresa faced the universal fear of a parent when her child falls ill. Emphasising the critical importance of noticing early signs of TB, such as swollen glands, especially in children who may not display the more common symptoms like coughing.
2. **Overcoming Fear and Stigma:** The story highlights how fear and stigma surrounding TB and HIV can put off people from seeking help or attending clinic. Teresa's role in empowering workplaces and TB wardens to educate about early TB detection is a vital step towards dismantling these barriers.
3. **Importance of Vaccination:** Gou's story reminds us of the benefits of the BCG vaccination against severe forms of TB, particularly in children. It serves as a call to ensure all vaccinations are up to date.
4. **Comprehensive Family Healthcare:** Teresa's decision to take the whole family for a check-up, not just Gou, when signs of TB were suspected, shows a comprehensive approach to TB and family health. It ensures that TB is addressed within the context of the family and community, rather than in isolation.
5. **TB is Not Always Visible:** Gou's case illustrates that TB does not always present with the stereotypical symptoms, such as coughing. Her asymptomatic presentation serves as a reminder that TB can manifest differently, particularly in children, making vigilance and awareness crucial.
6. **Community and Workplace Engagement:** The story concludes on a positive note with Gou engaging with workplace TB wardens, showcasing the importance of involving even the youngest members of the community in educational efforts. This involvement helps demystify TB, making the disease more approachable and manageable through shared knowledge and actions.
7. **Act Quickly on Concerns:** Teresa's guilt over potentially delaying seeking medical advice for TB is a reminder for all to act swiftly on health concerns. Early intervention can make a significant difference in outcomes, particularly with diseases like TB where early detection and treatment are key to preventing spread and ensuring recovery.

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## Q & A MUM AND GOU

1. What should you do if you suspect you have TB symptoms?

**Answer:** Don't delay, visit a TB clinic near you

2. Will a BCG vaccination prevent a child from getting TB?

**Answer:** No, but it will protect the child from getting severe forms of TB

3. Where do I find the TB clinic locations and contacts?

**Answer:** Ask our friendly health workers on 76762482 or download the TB clinic location and contacts on the B4H website. [www.businesses4health.com](http://www.businesses4health.com)

[https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/tb\\_profiles/?\\_inputs\\_&entity\\_type=%22country%22&iso2=%22PG%22&lan=%22EN%22](https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/tb_profiles/?_inputs_&entity_type=%22country%22&iso2=%22PG%22&lan=%22EN%22)

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## DASHBOARD FACTS DATA:

- Reports from 2022 identified 2400 people had drug resistant TB
- Estimated proportion of TB cases with MDR/RR-TB\*, 2022
- Previously treated cases 22% (5.7-48)
- 22% of previously treated cases had drug resistant TB
- 55% PTB or TB in the lungs
- TB in Children under age of 14. 24% of the national case load were children
- 40 % men (aged  $\geq 15$  years)
- TB preventive therapy (TPT) is available for children and household contacts
- Failure to complete treatment can result in relapse.
- TB treatment coverage (notified/estimated incidence), 2022 was 80%
- FREE TB services. TB patients facing catastrophic total costs, 2019 34%
- without treatment TB is often fatal. An estimate of 12% of TB case in 2022 died.