

Researchers carried out a cluster randomised trial in South Africa to evaluate the effect of lay health workers on tuberculosis control among peasant farm workers and farm dwellers. Tuberculosis treatment completion rates were significantly higher among participants in the lay health worker group. The aim of the qualitative study was to understand how the lay health workers had experienced their role.

Data was collected through focus group interviews, and a thematic analysis was carried out. Data collection and analysis was led by an experienced qualitative researcher. The main author of the randomised trial was also involved in the qualitative study.

While the randomised trial illustrated that the lay health worker programme could successfully increase treatment completion rates, the qualitative study illustrated a number of issues that could directly influence the success and sustainability of this programme. These issues included the lay health workers' perceptions of the teaching methods; their perceptions of the incentives given; their motivations for taking on this role; the problems they experienced; and possible solutions to these problems.