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AIIMS study- Vitamin C can boost TB treatment

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A team of researchers at the Department of Biotechnology at AIIMS, New Delhi, has shown that adding vitamin C as a nutritional supplement while treating drug-sensitive tuberculosis patients with first-line TB drugs will boost the efficiency of treatment.

The team found that vitamin C imposes multiple stresses on TB bacteria such as hypoxia, acid stress, oxidative stress, reductive stress and metabolic stress. As a result of these stresses, there is slowing down of metabolism leading to dormancy and further progression to viable but non-culturable (VBNC) state.

In the lab, TB bacteria already exposed to vitamin C displayed resistance to two first-line drugs-isoniazid and rifampicin, as it progressed to a dormant state. Unlike these two drugs, pyrazinamide drug is capable of killing TB bacteria even in a dormant state. The addition of vitamin C increased the population of dormant bacteria and this led to an eight-fold increase in pyrazinamide’s ability to kill the bacteria.

The researchers believe that besides improving the efficacy of existing TB regimen, vitamin C can help in producing subclasses of bacteria to test new drugs.

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