Unlike most other infectious diseases, tuberculosis (TB) epidemics develop and resolve over time periods measured in decades and centuries. Vulnerability to TB changes markedly with age - risk declines after early childhood and then increases dramatically during adolescence. This gives rise to complex age-related patterns in the epidemiology of TB, which change as TB epidemics evolve over the long term. Concurrent epidemics of TB and HIV introduce additional complexity in many settings.

This lecture will review the age-related epidemiology of TB in modern epidemics, based on recent work conducted in the Philippines and South Africa - settings of high TB transmission but markedly different HIV prevalence. Adolescents are a neglected population in TB research and control, but they constitute a substantial number of patients in both countries. The role of adolescents in evolving TB epidemics will be discussed, together with their importance for TB elimination.

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