

Vuka! Let's unite towards a TB-free world!

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TB
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Implementing an AI-Powered Digital Treatment Supporter for TB Care in South Africa: Early Experience from Ekurhuleni and Bojanala Districts

¹ The Aurum Institute ² KNCV Tuberculosis Plus

Tanyaradzwa Dube¹ Nontobeko Ndlovu¹ Stephanie Gray² Felex Ndebele¹ Don Mudzengi¹ Thobani Ntshiqha¹ Zandile Sibeko¹ Zandile Mabuse¹ Lebohang Masia¹ William Brumskane¹ Kristian van Kalmthout²



Background

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- A decorative brushstroke in orange, blue, and red is located on the left side of the slide.
- TB treatment lasts 6 months+ and daily routines are affected
 - Side effects are common.
 - Questions arise between clinic visits, but available support is centred around clinic visits
 - Digital Adherence Technologies (DATs) have been introduced to support people with TB (endorsed by WHO and NSP for TB).

Aida

Aida

Aida is here for you.
Because support should be available
Anytime. Anywhere.

Sign up and get a **FREE** virtual supporter during
your tuberculosis treatment.



Aida has information about tuberculosis
and more: a companion in your TB
treatment journey and beyond!

- Aida is accessible via WhatsApp
- Aida is here to offer you counseling and support
- Aida will send you personalized messages



Scan the QR code and start
your journey with Aida today!

KNCV
TB PLUS

People can ask questions at any time about:

- symptoms and side effects
- medication
- daily life during treatment

Aida provides support throughout treatment

- encouragement
- information on side effects
- practical treatment guidance

Safe and supported use

- conversations are private
- concerns can be flagged
- staff follow-up when needed

Available in English, Setswana isiXhosa and isiZulu.

AI powered WhatsApp-based digital companion designed to support people on TB treatment between clinic visits.

Objective

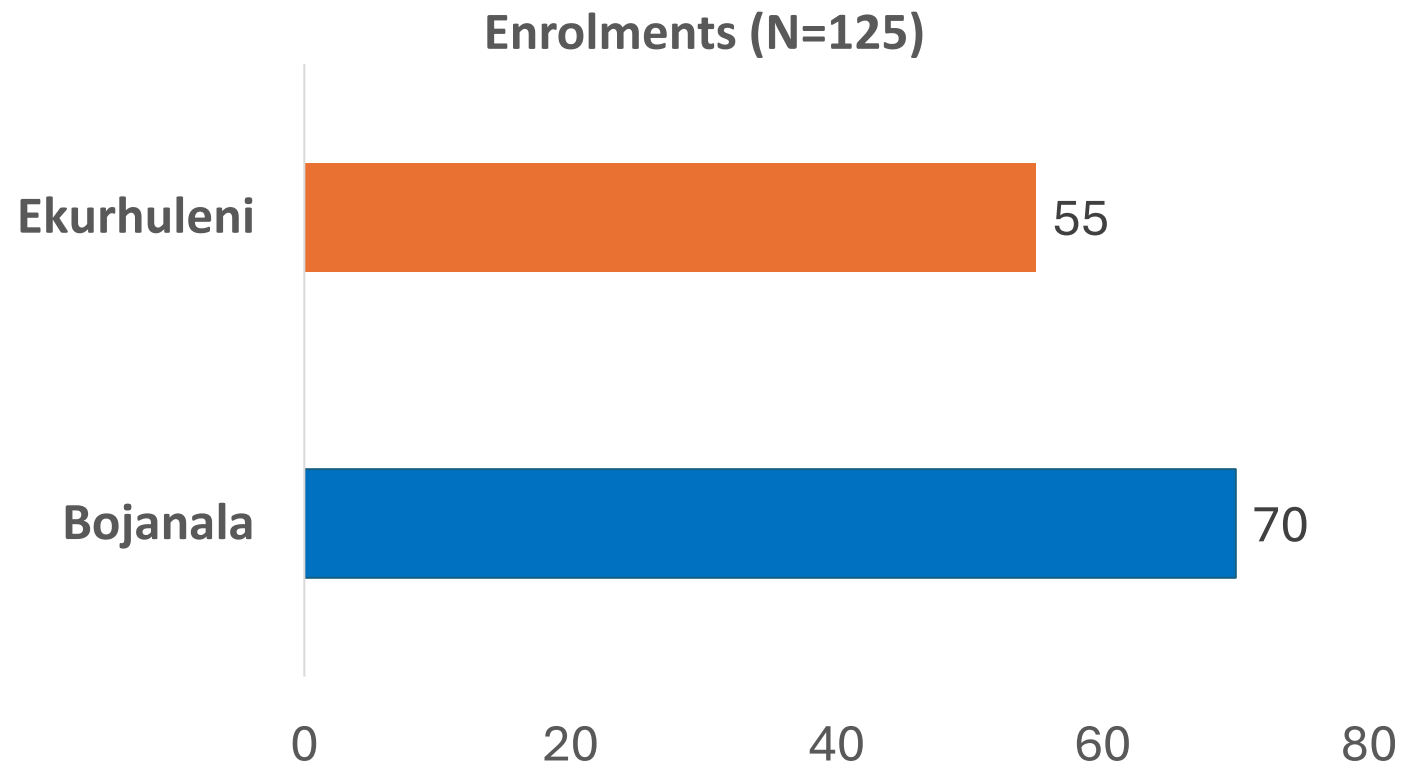


To assess the feasibility and acceptability of delivering AI-based TB treatment support via WhatsApp

Methods

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- A decorative brushstroke in orange, blue, and red is located on the left side of the slide.
- The project was piloted in South Africa, Mozambique and Nigeria
 - 12 facilities (7 in Ekurhuleni) and (5 in Bojanala District).
 - Inclusion criteria: adult people with TB who have access to WhatsApp and have at least one month to complete treatment.
 - Excluded: XDR-TB, no Whats App access and inability to consent.
 - People with TB receive pamphlets with instructions on using the Aida, allowing self-registration or assistance from a Research Assistant.
 - The Aida chatbot is available in English, Setswana isiXhosa and isiZulu.
 - Conducted in-depth interviews with participants

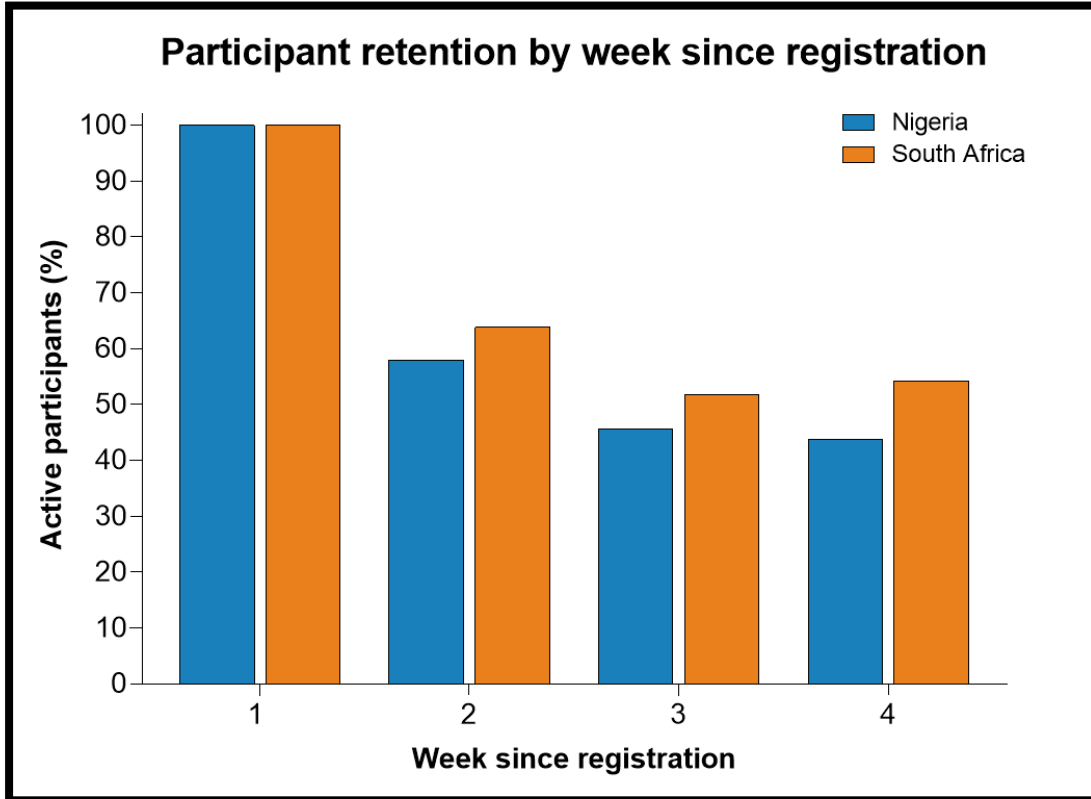
Results: Enrolments



September 2025-January 2026

- 125 registered on Aida
- 61% males
- 90% DS TB
- Mostly adults 30-45 years

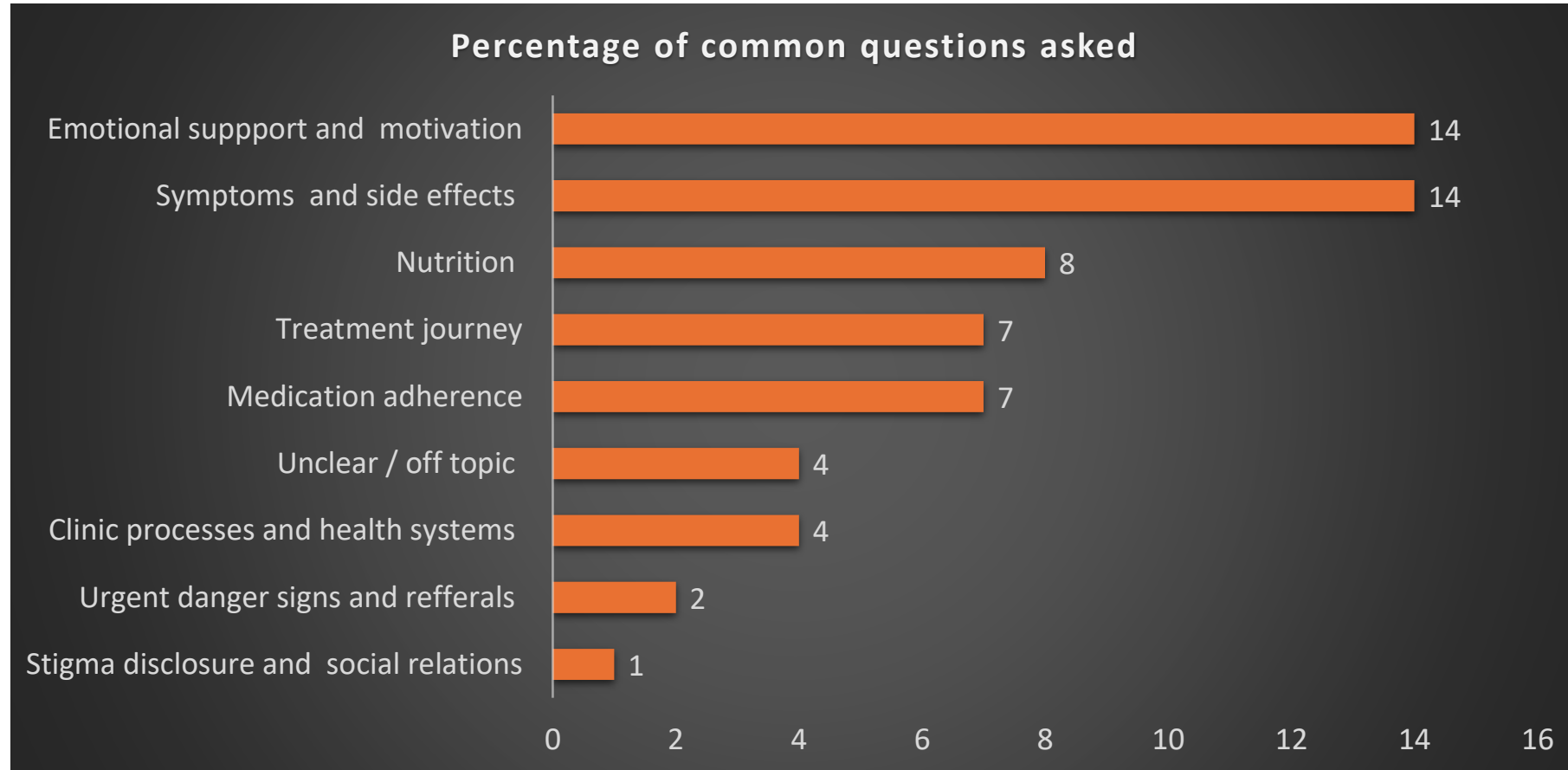
Results: Engagement



- 80% of participants engaged
- 86% interacted in English
- 74% initiated conversations
- nearly 4,000 messages were exchanged

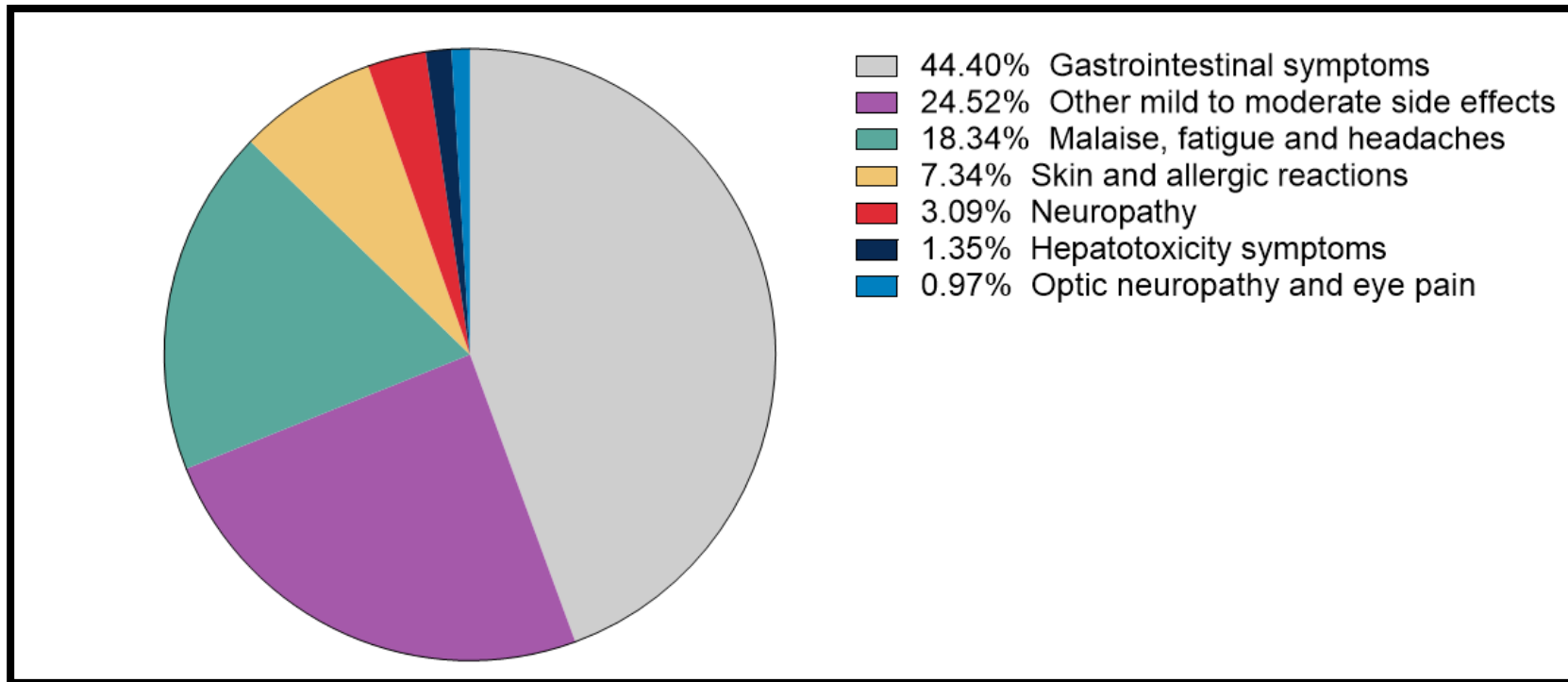
Results: Common topics asked

People seek emotional support and reassurance during treatment



- 61 % of messages were health related
- 39% managing AIDA itself
- Graph shows distribution of the 61%

Side effects discussed in AIDA



Qualitative Results: Facilitators to using AIDA



- Easy and convenient to use
- Provides emotional support during treatment
- Offers clear and accessible TB information
- Private and safe to use
- Builds trust while reinforcing connection to healthcare providers

“Usually, I ask questions, maybe if I’m feeling something like any pain, I ask AIDA questions, and then it responds accordingly. I also ask it about diet, and it tells me”

Qualitative Results: Barriers of using AIDA

- Limited access to mobile data
- Shared or unreliable phone access
- Electricity and network disruptions

“Uhm, data, you know it is a problem, it depletes now and then”

Challenges encountered largely reflected the realities of smartphone access and connectivity in the study settings rather than limitations of AIDA itself.

Conclusion

- People with TB need support beyond clinic visits, where side effects can be identified early and they can get emotional support.
- AIDA complements existing care and does not replace healthcare workers.
- Participant interactions highlight AIDA's potential to improve adherence and support between visits.
- Aida may be suitable for broader implementation and could inform future consideration for integration into national TB guidelines.

Thank You

Many thanks to the Department of Health, participating facilities, Aurum research staff, healthcare workers, and people with TB who made this implementation possible.



Gates Foundation

