**UNDER STRICT EMBARGO Until 5:00 PM ET/11:00 PM CET ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21**

CT short regimen patient: Abdirakhman

*24-year-old mathematics student Abdirakhman had to pause his studies when he got a diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis. But thanks to a shorter tuberculosis treatment course, he’ll graduate soon.*

**My diagnosis**

When I was diagnosed with drug-resistant TB in 2018, I was 20 years old. I had just started university in Nukus (Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan), and felt perfectly happy. When I learned that I had TB, I just couldn’t believe it was true. It was devastating. I felt ashamed of the disease, I was afraid to infect other people… Perhaps, it was because I was so young then, and lacked knowledge. I’m sharing my story to support people who are facing the same challenges.

At the time of my diagnosis, I only told my parents, siblings and close friends. Now I'm 24, and I wouldn't hide the disease from anyone.

Over these years, people’s attitudes to tuberculosis and to people who suffer from this disease has changed. Maybe not significantly, but, for example, in my childhood if we became aware that someone got TB, the reaction was shock and fear. Adults forbid us from approaching people with TB or visit them at home - they said we could get infected.

Nowadays, if people learn that somebody got TB the reaction is different: “What a misfortune! Hopefully, the person goes to the doctor, and gets well soon, since the TB treatment exists”. I’m still wary of sharing my picture – I don’t know what the future will bring, but I want to share my story.

**My treatment**

My treatment course was short - only six months. I chose to join the TB-PRACTECAL clinical trial and was randomly selected to receive the short treatment course of six months compared to the standard two years or more. There were difficult periods but it was still better than two years of treatment. I was able to get back to studying pretty quickly.

In the TB hospital, in the evenings we used to hang out together with other patients, and some of them were on standard two-year treatment. Some of them would say: “You know, this is a trial anyway, the medications are new and are still being tested…”. They doubted that our treatment was working. But we felt that the treatment worked and made us feel better.

We kept on going, and those of us on the short treatment course would encourage each other.

At the same time, the people who were on the two-year treatment course sounded rather stressed discussing it. They admitted that our treatment was much shorter. Even looking at their faces, I understood how difficult the long journey was for them.

**My future**

Now I have finished my course of treatment and I am back at university, studying maths. I would like to thank the doctors who helped me to recover, as I feel absolutely fine now.

I am a 4th year student now. If I had not become sick and didn’t have to take leave from my studies, I would have already graduated, and would have already started working. But I feel lucky to only have missed one academic year. I want to work in a bank, - I am really interested in this work, - and I hope this will happen very soon now.