BACKGROUND

The Philippines met all the three targets for tuberculosis (TB) incidence, prevalence and mortality based on the Global Tuberculosis Report of 2015, however, the country still remains as one of the high-burden countries identified by the World Health Organization (WHO). Factors that may have contributed to the increasing incidence of TB are knowledge and attitude of Filipinos towards the disease, as gaps and misconceptions create barriers for TB control efforts.

OBJECTIVE

The study aimed to determine the knowledge and attitudes of Filipinos, 15 years old and above towards tuberculosis.

METHODS

Participants (n=25,697) were Filipinos, 15 years old and above. Face-to-face interview using an 18-item questionnaire adapted from the 2003 and 2008 National Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) was carried out to assess their knowledge and attitude towards tuberculosis. Knowledge was assessed in terms of awareness of the disease, knowing that tuberculosis can be cured, and identifying its signs and symptoms, causes and modes of transmission. Attitude was assessed in terms of willingness to work with a person previously treated with tuberculosis. Analysis was done using Stata 12.

RESULTS

Findings showed high levels of awareness (91.2%) and knowledge that tuberculosis can be cured (94.6%). The proportion of Filipinos with positive attitude towards working with a person previously treated with tuberculosis was considerably high (79.3%). The most known signs and symptoms of tuberculosis were cough, weight loss, and blood in sputum. However, knowledge that microbes cause tuberculosis was low (12.9%); mostly knew that it is caused by smoking and alcohol drinking. In terms of modes of transmission, majority identified that tuberculosis is transmitted by sharing utensils (60.1%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness on tuberculosis was high. Most of the respondents knew that tuberculosis is curable although there were misconceptions on its causes, signs and symptoms, and modes of transmission. Efforts to intensify awareness, knowledge, and to address these misconceptions are needed to further reduce the incidence of tuberculosis in the Philippines. The comprehensive plan of action to eliminate tuberculosis in the country should be established and strengthened.