



XDR-TB: extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis

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Stop TB Department www.who.int/tb

Italy reports first cases of TB resistant to all drugs

Researchers have reported two cases of TB in Italy that were resistant to every single drug currently available to treat TB. The analysis was based on 2888 culture-confirmed TB cases diagnosed consecutively between 2003 and 2006 by TB clinical reference centres in Germany and Italy: 2 cases were resistant to all first- and second-line drugs; and 11 were XDR-TB (resistant to any fluoroquinolone and to at least one of three injectable second-line drugs). Full details of the study are published in the May issue of [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#).

Infection control guidelines published

Guidelines containing new information on infection control aimed at reducing TB transmission in HIV settings – a key action for preventing the spread of XDR-TB – have been published. [TB infection control in the era of expanding HIV care and treatment](#) is an addendum to guidelines issued by WHO in 1999. The booklet has chapters on work practice and administrative control measures; environmental control measures; and protection of health care workers. It also promotes a five-step checklist to prevent TB transmission in patients under the headings: (i) screen, (ii) educate, (iii) separate, (iv) provide HIV service and (v) investigate for TB or refer. There is also a sample infection control plan and training materials to improve staff awareness and skills on TB infection control.

US Global AIDS Coordinator outlines response to XDR-TB

The head of the US Government's Global AIDS programme, Ambassador Mark Dybul, has warned that XDR-TB should be "of great concern to all of us". [Speaking to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) on Capitol Hill, he told the Congressional Committee that TB/HIV coinfection is a key priority for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), with US funding for TB tripling in four years. The committee was also informed that PEPFAR staff are working closely with the US TB Task Force to develop a concerted government response to TB, and are collaborating with WHO, the Global Fund and other international partners to strengthen laboratory systems, establish infection control measures and expand programmes to prevent, diagnose and manage drug-resistant TB in people living with HIV/AIDS.

XDR-TB action set to be discussed at World Health Assembly

Ministers of Health attending the [60th World Health Assembly](#) will be asked to consider a resolution urging xx Member States to develop and implement long-term plans for TB prevention and control. The resolution also urges Member States to declare, where appropriate, TB as an emergency, and to step up action required to halt the spread of XDR-TB. WHO is also requested, in the resolution, to strengthen support to countries affected by XDR-TB. The resolution will be presented for consideration at the World Health Assembly, which takes place in Geneva on 14–23 May.

Drug-resistant TB successes featured in special TB focus edition of the WHO Bulletin

A report on the successful and intensive efforts that have been put in place in Latvia and the Philippines to reduce multidrug-resistant TB is one of the main features in the May edition of the [WHO Bulletin](#). The bulletin, which this month focuses on global TB control, has several articles relevant to drug resistance, including an analysis into the damaging impact that weak laboratory services are having on TB diagnosis and treatment and the management of drug-sensitive cases, particularly in Africa. There are also details of a pioneering study into the different approaches to promoting successful treatment adherence in TB patients to ensure that they complete their full course of medication.

New recommendations issued to strengthen drug-resistant TB surveillance

[Interim recommendations](#) for the surveillance of drug resistance in TB have been published on the WHO Stop TB website. The recommendations are being issued to provide up-to-date guidance on the design and implementation of drug-resistance surveys or surveillance systems to TB control programme managers and their staff. The latest recommendations build on those developed in 2003, and provide additional specific information related to groups at high risk of TB infection, incorporation of second-line drug susceptibility testing, and HIV coinfection. The interim recommendations will be updated later in the year to incorporate revisions agreed by TB drug-resistant specialists attending a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, on TB testing and drug susceptibility in July.

Related planning, capacity building and investigation efforts

- South Africa's Acting Minister of Health, Mr Jeff Radebe, has welcomed the arrival of WHO TB expert Dr Fabio Scano in Pretoria, who will be providing technical assistance on: treatment adherence of TB patients; quality assurance in the laboratory network; surveillance systems; revision of the drug-resistant TB guidelines; training of health care professionals; finalization of the country's infection control guidelines; collaboration with national partners; and support to the epidemiological investigation under way in KwaZulu-Natal. The placement is part of a two-year agreement between WHO's Regional Office in Africa and South Africa.
- Poland and Slovenia are the latest countries to have identified and confirmed cases of XDR-TB, bringing to 37 the total number of countries reporting XDR-TB to WHO.