



XDR-TB: extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis

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Stop TB Department www.who.int/tb

Global task force highlights progress

WHO has issued the first update on achievements by the Global Task Force on XDR-TB. The 20-page report outlines actions to date on the eight agreed recommendations issued by the task force. More than 80 activities, carried out by WHO and its partners, are listed in the [Global task force update on XDR-TB achievements](#). Over 120 participants, including TB officers from the most affected countries and senior experts in the fields of MDR-TB, HIV, infection control and communication, attended the meeting at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, in October 2006.

German EU Presidency: XDR-TB "one of the highest priority health problems"

The European Union has urged countries affected by XDR-TB to consider it "one of their highest priority health problems". In a [statement](#) delivered on behalf of the German EU Presidency by Portugal to the WHO Executive Board, they voiced alarm over XDR-TB, particularly where there is "practically no chance of treatment", and called for WHO assistance to countries to be strengthened. The statement supported the [WHO Executive Board resolution](#) for long-term planning on TB prevention and control, which included recommendations urging Member States to address and limit the emergence and transmission of XDR-TB. The resolution will be presented to the World Health Assembly in May 2007.

CROI on XDR-TB

XDR-TB features in the opening symposium on "Urgent issues in the developing world" of the 14th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. Latest details of the South Africa outbreak in Tugela Ferry will be presented by the South African Medical Research Council, followed by a summary by WHO of the global response to date. The conference in Los Angeles, USA, opens on 25 February 2006 and attracts the world's leading researchers on HIV/AIDS.

Individual human rights versus public health protection – WHO response

The urgency of responding to XDR-TB has been heightened by calls for the involuntary detention of XDR-TB patients who willfully refuse treatment and remain a public health threat. [WHO's response](#) emphasizes that such actions must be carried out within a legal and ethical framework, and only as a last resort when all other voluntary measures have failed. WHO also reiterated its commitment to combating XDR-TB through strong TB control, as outlined in the Stop TB Strategy, and the full implementation of recommendations agreed by the Global Task Force on XDR-TB.

World TB Day 2007

MARCH 24
World TB Day
TB anywhere
is
TB everywhere!

The first reference to XDR-TB occurred on World TB Day 2006 in the 24 March MMWR report, summarizing the findings of a joint WHO and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study. Since then, the XDR-TB threat has dominated the health headlines and is regarded as second only to avian influenza as a global health priority for 2007 by the [Center for Global Development](#). Next month, the Stop TB Partnership will underline this warning through its [World TB Day 2007](#) slogan: "TB anywhere is TB everywhere" and a message that global progress on TB control could be jeopardized if governments fail to respond adequately to the global TB epidemic. In the run up to the annual day on 24 March, a series of events in cities across the world will take place, aimed at raising awareness of TB including XDR-TB.

Green Light Committee strengthened to improve delivery of second-line drugs

The Green Light Committee (GLC), which promotes access to and rational use of second line anti-TB drugs in resource-limited settings, is being strengthened to respond to XDR-TB. Two officers have been recruited in the GLC secretariat in line with the expansion of the GLC's technical review committee. The expansion means applications for medicines to treat drug-resistant TB will be processed and delivered to countries more quickly. Three new institutions have recently joined the review committee: KNCV TB Foundation, Hospital Muniz (Argentina), and World Care Council.

Related planning, capacity building and investigation efforts

- 27 countries have now reported XDR-TB cases, with Canada, Japan and Norway confirming cases to WHO.
- South Africa – the South African Medical Research Council is undertaking a technical assistance mission this month in KwaZulu-Natal Province; in March, a technical assistance team arrives in Swaziland to review and strengthen the national XDR-TB emergency plan. In Malawi, a team will arrive to assess its laboratory capacity.
- WHO staff will visit South Africa again this month. Among the objectives are: finalizing arrangements for an international WHO officer to commence work in South Africa as soon as possible; and agreeing on WHO's role in the investigation of the development of XDR-TB in Tugela Ferry in KwaZulu-Natal Province.
- Work is ongoing to determine the responses needed from national and international authorities in the event of MDR-TB and XDR-TB outbreaks once the International Health Regulations come into force on 15 June 2007.