



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL CRITICAL TO HAWAII'S HEALTH
WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY IS MARCH 24, 2007

HONOLULU – On March 24, Hawaii, the U.S. and other nations around the world will observe *World Tuberculosis Day*. On this day in 1882, Robert Koch announced the discovery of tuberculosis (TB) bacillus. The yearly commemoration is marked by events in Hawaii and worldwide to raise awareness of TB and to stress the importance of TB control efforts. Although many people believe that TB is a disease of the past, it is still a leading killer among infectious diseases worldwide.

The state of Hawaii has one of the highest TB case rates in the nation. In 2006, the rate was 8.9 cases for every 100,000 people.

Last year Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) clinics placed and read almost 50,000 tuberculin skin tests statewide; among these, 14.4% were positive. Most of these persons had latent TB infection and were offered treatment with 9 months of antibiotics to prevent progression to active TB disease. There were 115 cases of active TB disease reported to DOH in Hawaii, with Oahu reporting the highest number of TB cases in the state. Total number of new TB cases increased 2.7% from 2005 (112 active TB cases) to 2006 (115 active TB cases). In the past decade, case rates have decreased 36.9%, from 14.1 cases per 100,000 in 1997 to 8.9 cases per 100,000 in 2006.

- Total active TB cases reported statewide in 2006: 115 (8.9 cases/100,000 population)
 - 2006 cases by county:
 - Honolulu Co.: 95 new TB cases (10.5 cases/100,000)
 - Hawaii Co.: 7 new TB cases (4.2 cases/100,000)
 - Maui Co.: 9 new TB cases (6.4 cases/100,000)
 - Kauai Co.: 4 new TB cases (6.4 cases/100,000)

In 2006, 79.1% of the state's new TB cases were foreign-born, compared with 55% foreign-born TB cases reported nationally in 2005.

(more)

In recognition of World TB Day, the DOH TB Control Program co-sponsored free TB testing at the Kokua Kalihi Valley Health Center in Honolulu on March 20. The Program is also planning free screenings at the Next Step Project – Kaka`ako Homeless Shelter. These two outreach events, which serve predominantly Filipino, Samoan, Chuukese and other Micronesian communities, are co-sponsored by the Affordable Housing and Homeless Alliance, American Lung Association – Hawaii Chapter, Diagnostic Laboratory Services, H5 (Hawaii Helping the Hungry Have Hope), Hawaii Homeless Outreach and Medical Education (HOME) Project, Kokua Kalihi Valley Community Health Center, and Waikiki Health Center.

The Hawaii TB Program is procuring a new mobile x-Ray unit that to help screen more at-risk populations in communities around the island outside of its Lanakila clinic site. The Program hopes to have the new unit available for these large off-site screenings this month and to host additional community outreach activities in the future.

DOH continues to be vigilant about TB control in Hawaii and is currently updating Administrative Rules to include new blood tests for TB infection and screening based on risk assessment. Extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB has recently been reported in other parts of the world (e.g., South Africa, Korea), however Hawaii did not report any XDR cases or multidrug-resistant (MDR) cases in 2006.

TB is a disease that is commonly seen in the lungs and can be spread from person-to- person through the air. When a person with active TB disease in the lung or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, tiny drops containing *M. tuberculosis* may be spread into the air. If another person inhales these drops there is a chance that they will become infected with TB. Two forms of TB exist, both of which are treatable and curable:

1. Latent TB infection – when a person has TB bacteria in their body but the body's immune system is protecting them and they are not sick. Someone with latent TB infection cannot spread the infection to other people.
2. Active TB disease – when a person becomes sick with TB because their immune system can no longer protect them. Someone with active TB disease may be able to spread the disease to other people.

For more information on tuberculosis, please call the State of Hawaii Tuberculosis Control Program at 832-5737 or visit the Department of Health Web site at www.hawaii.gov/health/tb.

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