



For Immediate Release

NTCA and CDC Release Updated National Recommendations for Tuberculosis Screening, Testing, and Treatment of Health Care Personnel

May 16, 2019

Smyrna, GA – On May 16, 2019 the National Tuberculosis Controllers Association (NTCA), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released updated recommendations for tuberculosis (TB) screening, testing, and treatment of health care personnel. The updated recommendations are available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6819a3.htm>.

These updated recommendations supplement the existing 2005 guidelines for preventing the transmission of TB in health care settings. NTCA members led the process that brought together public health, academia, infection control, and occupational health stakeholders in a national workgroup to update these important recommendations.

The new recommendations include:

1. TB screening with an individual risk assessment and symptom evaluation at baseline (preplacement)
2. TB testing with an interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA) or a tuberculin skin test (TST) for persons without documented prior TB disease or latent TB infection (LTBI)
3. No routine serial TB testing at any interval after baseline in the absence of a known exposure or ongoing transmission
4. Encouragement of treatment for all health care personnel with untreated LTBI, unless treatment is contraindicated
5. Annual symptom screening for health care personnel with untreated LTBI
6. Annual TB education of all health care personnel

Central to the new recommendations is stopping routine, annual testing of all health care personnel. Dr. Robert Belknap, Medical Director of the Denver Metro Tuberculosis Clinic, and co-lead of the NTCA-CDC workgroup for these recommendations said, “The continued routine practice of annual testing has been costly, has resulted in false positive tests for TB infection, and is no longer supported by what we have observed in health care settings over time. This movement away from annual testing is long overdue.”

The new recommendations emphasize the importance of LTBI treatment, an essential component of national efforts to eliminate TB. Treatment for all health care personnel diagnosed with LTBI is strongly encouraged and completion of treatment is enhanced with recent advances in shorter-course treatments for LTBI. Dr. Lynn Sosa, co-lead of the NTCA-CDC workgroup and the Coordinator of the Tuberculosis Control Program for the Connecticut Department of Public Health calls the new recommendations “a big step towards TB elimination in the United States. These recommendations are in line with the US efforts to focus more on LTBI testing and treatment. LTBI treatment is what prevents later transmission of TB, not testing.”

Diana Fortune, current NTCA president, applauds the work of her colleagues. “NTCA welcomes these updated recommendations for TB screening and testing in healthcare settings but recognizes there are local- and state-level challenges to be addressed before universal adoption and the movement away from annual testing.” Health care facilities are encouraged to reach out to their state TB program for assistance and guidance on addressing state and local TB screening and testing regulations. For a directory of TB programs, see <http://www.tbcontrollers.org/community/statecityterritory/>.

NTCA is also engaged, with the leadership of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, in developing a companion document focused on the implementation of the updated recommendations. This document should be released within the next few weeks.

Additional information about LTBI testing and treatment, including shorter course regimens, can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/ltbi/ltbiresources.htm>. For concise provider guidance on the 3HP treatment regimen, see the fact sheet on *Using the Isoniazid/Rifapentine Regimen to Treat Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI)*, created by the NTCA at <http://www.tbcontrollers.org/resources/tb-infection/3hp/>.

For more information about the National Tuberculosis Controllers Association and what we do, please visit <http://www.tbcontrollers.org/>

For additional information:

Jennifer Kanouse
NTCA Director of Communications
ikanouse@tbcontrollers.org
(678) 503-0503