

Hello, The title of our abstract today is **COVID-19 Impact on US Tuberculosis Programs: A National Tuberculosis Controller Association (NTCA) Survey**

My name is Shu-Hua Wang from The Ohio State University.

**My co-Authors from the NTCA survey committee are:**

Katelynne Gardner Toren, Seattle and King County TB Program

Evan Timme, Arizona TB Surveillance Program

And Donna Wegener, Executive director of NTCA

- The NTCA conducted a survey assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on State and local TB Programs in the US in January to March of 2021.
- With greater than 140 responses from TB programs, the key findings included reported impacts in three areas: staffing, electronic platform, and clinical diagnosis.
- With regards to staffing:
  - The findings showed that TB Programs needed increased staff and/or time dedicated to TB activities.
  - As you may know, many TB staff were diverted to COVID-19 duties.
  - TB staff has specialized knowledge that is not easy to backfill, we need to continue to train and maintain a cohort of qualified TB staff.
- With regards to electronic platform
  - It was wonderful to see an increased utilization of electronic directly observed therapy or eDOT and telemedicine.
  - The benefits of electronic platform were noted but the limitations due to cost and access to technologies were also seen.
  - We need to find ways to sustain, expand, and reimburse eDOT and telemedicine.
- Finally, even though both COVID-19 and TB are respiratory illnesses.
  - With the shift in focus toward COVID-19, we have seen delayed or mis-diagnosis of TB.
  - The implications of these delays may not be fully understood for several years.
  - Education and awareness for clinical providers to “Think TB” is important particularly as the diagnosis of one does not rule out the other.
- **In conclusion**, TB Program staff are uniquely qualified to respond to COVID-19 and contributed significantly to the US response. TB program staff will likely be called upon to work future emerging threats or pandemics.
- This is an important time to invest in TB programs
  - It is important to respond to the depletion in staffing
  - It is important to integrate and implement innovative new technology such as eDOT and telemedicine
  - It is important to continue to educate and increase awareness of TB to clinical providers in our communities
  - This way, we can build out a solid infrastructure and knowledge base to prepare us for what might come.
- Thank you