



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Tuberculosis Experts Commemorate World Tuberculosis Day

SAN FRANCISCO – Today, the Coalition for a Tuberculosis (TB)-Free California and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) hosted a virtual press conference to commemorate World TB Day and to raise awareness of the global impact of TB. TB occurs in every part of the world impacting millions of people each year. [Of the 13 million estimated individuals living with latent TB infection \(LTBI\) in the United States, 10% of LTBI cases advance into active TB.](#) Unfortunately, Asian, Asian American (A/AA), Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (NH/PI) populations are disproportionately impacted by TB at a greater rate compared to other racial and ethnic groups. [A/AAs accounted for nearly 36% and NH/PIs accounted for nearly 2% of all United States TB cases in 2021.](#) In recent years, [California is one of four U.S. states that combined annually report nearly half of all TB cases in the United States.](#)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, TB was the leading infectious disease killer in the world, claiming 1.5 million lives each year. As the COVID-19 pandemic impacted resources and the livelihoods of many people, COVID-19 reversed years of progress made in TB elimination. In 2021, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), up to 13 million people were estimated to be living with latent TB infection (LTBI) and 7,882 reported TB cases in the United States. In addition, California has nearly double the rate of TB disease than the nation, and TB disproportionately impacts AA, NH, PI, Latinx, and Black individuals.

While World TB Day is an important reminder of the progress that many TB champions across the world have made in TB elimination, there is still significant work to be done. Community members, local coalitions, and national partners must continue working together to bring innovative, culturally competent, and linguistically appropriate care to those most impacted by TB.

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“Community leaders bring cultural and historical knowledge of their community’s needs and best practices. It is essential that we collaborate with communities, including AAs and NH/PIs, to lend their expertise when addressing the disproportionate impact of LTBI/TB,” said Chibo Shinagawa, MS, Program Manager, Infectious Diseases, at AAPCHO. “As we work in partnership with community leaders, TB experts, and local coalitions, we look forward to fostering community-centered innovation in LTBI/TB prevention and treatment while addressing the inequities and barriers.”

“Most people think TB is a disease of the past. It is not. It infects one quarter of the world’s population, and two million Californians are estimated to be infected,” said Sundari Mase, MD, MPH, President of the CTCA Executive Committee. “Every year we see deaths from this preventable, treatable, curable disease. TB does not impact everyone equally; vulnerable communities continue to disproportionately suffer the devastating impacts of TB.”

“I am very proud of what my TB survivor peers and I have endured and accomplished so far, and although I carry this title with pride, I would love to witness the day when people no longer have to question whether they’ll survive this age-old disease,” said Jacqueline Cuen, a TB survivor.

“North East Medical Services (NEMS) recognizes TB as a major health disparity affecting Asian immigrant communities and is committed to preventing TB in the primary care community health setting,” said Amy Tang, MD, Director of Immigrant Health at NEMS. “For more than a decade, NEMS has worked in collaboration with the San Francisco and California Departments of Health to increase TB testing amongst its non-U.S.-born patients from 8% in 2010 to 52% in 2019, along with an increase in LTBI treatment.” NEMS was awarded the 2023 CDC US TB Elimination Champion Award and the 2023 CTCA TB Elimination Hero Award.

Margo Sidener, CEO of Breathe California of the Bay Area, Golden Gate, and Central Coast, an organization founded a century ago specifically to fight TB, added, “the work of the Santa Clara County TB Prevention Partnership proved that engaging local community based organizations, health agencies, school officials, faith-based organizations, and even businesses to reach communities at risk of TB can have significant impacts. Our collaborative, with modest funding, not only built awareness that led to increased screening, reaching thousands annually for almost 20 years, it also conducted important professional training that reduced poor TB treatment outcomes.

“Currently, funding is lacking to find, test, and treat those with TB infection in the communities at highest risk for developing TB disease despite the health and economic cost savings this could manifest. With a modest increase in funding, those on the frontlines can develop TB prevention partnerships that move the state toward TB elimination,” said Michael Carson, a former TB program manager and member of the CTCA Executive Board Committee.

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As we continue to commemorate World TB Day, we look forward to building the California infrastructure and foundation for innovation for TB elimination with our community members, community leaders, and partners.

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of community health organizations dedicated to promoting advocacy, collaboration and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in the United States, the U.S. territories, and Freely Associated States. For more information on AAPCHO, please visit www.aapcho.org.

About Coalition for a TB-Free California

The California TB Controllers Association (CTCA) invites you to join the Coalition for a TB-Free California, a growing statewide coalition of community organizations, survivors, advocates, and providers working with public health TB experts with the following purposes:

1. Engage in TB elimination activities to increase health equity among Californians
2. Promote TB prevention to public and community health care systems
3. Increase the visibility of TB as a preventable, urgent public health problem
4. Advocate for new resources to eliminate TB in California

About NEMS

North East Medical Services (NEMS) is one of the largest non-profit community health centers in the United States targeting the medically underserved population of the San Francisco Bay Area. NEMS offers comprehensive health care services to a variety of patients, a majority of whom are low-income, access Medicaid, and are limited English proficient. NEMS providers and staff offer linguistically competent and culturally-sensitive services in many languages and dialects other than English, including Cantonese, Mandarin, Toishan, Vietnamese, Burmese, Tagalog, Spanish, and Hindi. NEMS operates 21 clinics and delivery sites in San Francisco, Daly City, and San Jose. For more information, please visit www.nems.org.

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