



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

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**NEW GENERATION OF DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS WILL REVOLUTIONIZE SCREENING  
FOR TUBERCULOSIS IN HAWAII**

World Tuberculosis Day March 24, 2006 – observed March 23, 2006

HONOLULU – On March 24, Hawaii, the U.S. and other nations around the world will celebrate *World Tuberculosis Day*. On this day in 1882, Robert Koch announced the discovery of the tuberculosis (TB) bacillus. The yearly commemoration is marked by events worldwide intended to raise awareness of TB and stress the importance of TB control efforts.

TB is a disease that is commonly seen in the lungs and is 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 mycobacterium tuberculosis may be spread into the air. If another person breathes in 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.

(more)

Hawaii usually leads the nation in having a highest state rate of TB with 8.8 cases per 100,000 in 2005 (1.8 times the national rate). Although many people believe that TB is a disease of the past, it is still a leading killer among infectious diseases worldwide.

A new diagnostic test, QuantiFERON<sup>®</sup>-TB Gold, received final approval for use in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration in 2005. Hawaii's TB Control Program was innovative, moved forward and secured special state funding to implement this new blood test. This major shift in methodology from tuberculin skin testing (TST) to a new generation of lab based diagnostic tests will revolutionize the screening, improve the specificity of TB testing, and reduce the number of false positive tests. Currently, the QuantiFERON<sup>®</sup>-TB Gold test is being used in Honolulu for targeted populations and will be more readily available once funding increases to accommodate the volume of testing that Hawaii conducts annually. "With the introduction of these new diagnostic tools, we are updating our TB screening in Hawaii, thereby allowing the program to focus testing and treatment of latent TB infection on persons at highest risk for progression to active TB disease," says Dr. Jessie Wing, TB Program Chief.

In 2005, DOH clinics placed and read over 50,000 tuberculin skin tests statewide; among these, 17.8% 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. In 2005 there were 112 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 reported decreased 3.4% from 2004 (116 active TB cases) to 2005 (112 active TB cases). Case rates have decreased 46.0% from 1995 (16.3 TB cases/100,000 population) to 2005 (8.8 TB cases/100,000 population).

- Total active TB cases reported statewide in 2005: 112 (8.8 cases/100,000 population)
  - 2005 cases by county:
    - Honolulu Co.: 83 new TB cases (9.2 cases/100,000)
    - Hawaii Co.: 12 new TB cases (7.4 cases/100,000)
    - Maui Co.: 13 new TB cases (9.4 cases/100,000)
    - Kauai Co.: 4 new TB cases (6.5 cases/100,000)

In 2005, 73.2% of the state's TB cases were foreign-born, compared with 54% foreign-born TB cases reported nationally in 2004.

To commemorate World TB Day, the State of Hawaii Department of Health TB Control Program will host the following special presentations:

**TOPIC:** "New TB Screening and Treatment Methods"

**SPEAKER:** Charles L. Daley, MD

National Jewish Medical and Research Center

**DATE:** Thursday, March 23, 2006

**LOCATION/TIME:**

- Lanakila Health Center TB Conference Room, 1700 Lanakila Avenue  
2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Tel. 832-5737.
- Queens Medical Center's Mabel Smythe Conference Center  
6:00 p.m. – 8:30pm.  
(Please call 832-5737 or email [Derrick.Felix@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:Derrick.Felix@doh.hawaii.gov) to RSVP ASAP for dinner for this venue.)

For more information on tuberculosis contact the Hawaii Tuberculosis Control Program at 832-5737 or visit the Department of Health Web site at <http://www.hawaii.gov/health/tb>.

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