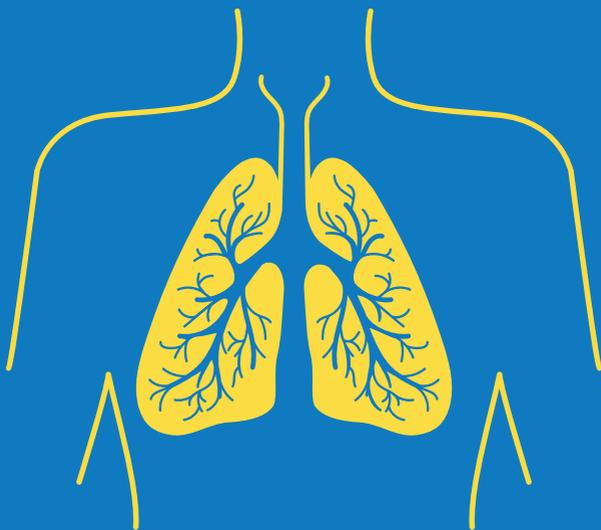




Sir Brian Bell  
Foundation  
Supporting Health and Education in PNG



Wanted: **Leaders for a TB-free world.**

# World TB Day

**March 24th 2018**



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## Wanted: **Leaders for a TB-free world.**

The Sir Brian Bell Foundation is proud to support health and education initiatives in Papua New Guinea. Stay up to date with all the latest news from the Foundation and the programs and individuals it supports via our Facebook page:

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The Sir Brian Bell Foundation proudly supports World TB Day as part of its on-going commitment to the people of PNG. TB is at epidemic proportions around many areas of PNG. This is due to numerous factors including education, lack of testing and lack of medications. In an on-going effort, the Sir Brian Bell Foundation not only contributes funding to key charities and agencies to support the process around detection and treatment of TB but works to educate the next generation that TB is something that can be cured and managed. It is not here to stay in PNG, if people start to understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles and learn to understand the symptoms of TB, we can start to effectively reduce the infection rate in PNG.

World TB Day, held on 24th March every year, raises public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB) and highlights the need to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic. World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 10.4 million people fell ill with TB in 2016, which resulted in 1.8 million TB deaths, making it the top infectious killer worldwide. Despite significant progress over the last decades, TB continues to be the top infectious killer worldwide, claiming over 4,500 lives a day. The 2018 theme "Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world" - focuses on building commitment to end TB, not only at the political level with Heads of State and Ministers of Health, but at all levels from Mayors, Governors, parliamentarians and community leaders, to people affected with TB, civil society advocates, health workers, doctors or nurses, NGOs and other partners. Over 95% of TB deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, factors such

as malnutrition, poor housing and sanitation, compounded by other risk factors such as tobacco, alcohol use and diabetes, affect vulnerability to TB and access to care. Furthermore, this access is often hindered by catastrophic costs associated with illness, seeking and staying in care, and lack of social protection, resulting in a vicious cycle of poverty and ill-health according to WHO.

### **WHAT IS TB**

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis* which most commonly affects the lungs however can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine and brain. TB is spread from person to person through the air when people with TB cough, sneeze or spit. These germs propel into the air and can be inhaled, only a few of these germs need to be inhaled to become infected. These germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. About one-quarter of the world's population has latent TB, which means people have been infected by TB bacteria but are not (yet) ill with the disease and cannot transmit the disease however have a 5–15% lifetime risk of falling ill with TB. When a person develops active TB disease, the symptoms may be mild for many months which can lead to delays in seeking medical help and results in transmission of the bacteria to others. People with active TB can infect 10–15 other people through close contact over the course of a year, if you are experiencing a persistent cough it is important to have this evaluated by a doctor immediately. Those with compromised immune systems such as those living with HIV, malnutrition diabetes or tobacco users are at a higher risk of developing TB. Tobacco use greatly increases the

risk of TB disease and death with 8% of TB cases worldwide are attributable to smoking. If you regularly use tobacco products, talk to your doctor about quitting. In addition, after 12 months your increased risk of dying from heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TB?

People who have latent TB infection do not have any symptoms, and cannot spread TB to others. Those who have active TB may experience:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Have a cough for 3 weeks or longer (sometimes with blood or sputum)
- Chest pain
- Fever
- Night sweats

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms it is important to see your doctor immediately for a health evaluation and TB test.

### MULTIDRUG-RESISTANT TB

Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs however is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs. Drug resistance emerges when anti-TB medicines are used inappropriately, through incorrect prescription by health care providers, poor quality drugs, and patients stopping treatment prematurely. Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) remains a public health crisis and a health security threat. WHO estimates that there were 600 000 new cases with resistance to rifampicin – the most effective first-line drug, of which 490 000 had MDR-TB. In some cases, more severe drug resistance can develop. Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options. WHO estimates that roughly 6.2% of MDR-TB cases had XDR-TB in 2016.

### TB AND HIV

In 2015 an estimated 0.4 million people died of HIV-associated TB worldwide according to World Health Organization (WHO). Those people living with HIV are 20 to 30 times more likely to develop active TB disease than people without HIV. Together HIV and TB form a lethal combination, each speeding the others progress. If you have HIV talk to your doctor about your TB risk. Get tested!

### TB AND PREGNANCY

Untreated tuberculosis represents a greater hazard to a pregnant woman and her foetus than TB treatment. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that Infants born to women



with untreated TB may be of lower birth weight than those born to women without TB and, in rare circumstances, the infant may be born with TB. Pregnant women who are diagnosed with TB should start treatment as soon as TB is detected, although the drugs used in the initial treatment regimen for TB cross the placenta, they do they do not have harmful effects on the foetus. Breastfeeding should not be discouraged for women being treated with the first-line anti-tuberculosis drugs because the concentrations of these drugs in breast milk are too small to produce toxicity in the nursing newborn. If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about your TB risk.

### TREATMENT OF TB

If prescribed medication for TB, it is important to take exactly as prescribed even if you start to feel better. The vast majority of TB cases can be cured when medicines are provided and taken properly. Medication must be taken for a minimum of six months to kill all the TB bacteria. Active, drug-susceptible TB disease is treated with a standard 6-month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs. Between 2000 and 2016, an estimated 53 million lives were saved through TB diagnosis and treatment. Do not skip doses of your medications, or share your medications with anyone else and keep up to date with doctors' visits. If you are having any issues remembering to take your medication it is important to notify your doctor immediately.

### PREVENTING TB TRANSMISSION

In order to reduce exposure in households where someone has infectious TB, the following actions should be taken whenever possible:

- Houses should be adequately ventilated;
- Always cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing. Use a tissue, upper sleeve or elbow and never cough or sneeze into your hands. If you use a tissue through it away.
- Spend as much time as possible outdoors;
- If possible, sleep alone in a separate, adequately ventilated room;
- Spend as little time as possible on public transport or where large numbers of people gather.

