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**Elephants can transmit TB to humans**

Circus workers, zookeepers and others having direct or indirect contact with elephants are on alert because of a study definitively showing that elephants can transmit tuberculosis to humans, the result of a cooperative investigation between the Tennessee Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

The study, "Elephant-to-Human Transmission of Tuberculosis, 2009," appears in the March issue of the CDC journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. It

describes the 2009 outbreak of tuberculosis skin test conversions among eight employees at an elephant refuge in Tennessee.

Three infected employees did not have close contact with the elephant but worked in an administrative building near the barn where the elephant was housed and cleaned. Investigators believe the bacteria spread through the air either when the elephant sneezed or when the barn was cleaned with a pressure washer.

"Concern about TB transmission among humans and elephants was raised in the late 1990s and it was suspected that elephants gave TB to their handlers," said lead author Rendi Murphree, a CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer and also a Vanderbilt University visiting scholar.

"But ours is the first study to clearly document TB transmission from an elephant with TB disease to humans. Fortunately none of the eight infected employees developed active TB disease and the elephant is receiving treatment for her condition."

There are approximately 500 captive elephants in North America, with an estimated 12 percent having TB infection. Researchers said that estimate is likely low because detection methods are often inaccurate.

"There are culture methods and blood tests to detect TB in elephants but these methods often produce false negative results," Murphree said.

"This means TB infection, or active disease, can't be ruled out if the test is negative. Therefore, guidelines for the control of TB in elephants rely on test results as well as the elephant's history of exposure to TB."

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT TYLER

**HEART** Land  
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A PARTNERSHIP OF UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AND TCID

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TB bacteria can often live in a person's body without causing illness because the body is able to fight the bacteria to keep it from growing.

When it does activate and begin multiplying, the TB disease can be very contagious and life threatening for both humans and elephants.

"What happened at the refuge is an unusual circumstance, but human tuberculosis is a serious and sometime life threatening illness that we deal with every day in public health," Murphree said.

"This study will be of great interest to the captive-elephant community, which includes zoos, circuses and private owners," said William Schaffner, a professor and chair of preventive medicine and co-author of the study. "Much still remains to be learned about the diagnosis and optimal treatment of TB in elephants."

Adapted from <http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2011/03/elephants-transmit-tb/>

**Announcing: New HNTC Employees****Introducing—Robert Petrossian**

Robert Petrossian joined the staff as an **Educational Specialist** in February 2011. Robert graduated from Medical School at the Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) in June 2009 with a degree in General Medicine. He completed a residency in Infectious Disease Epidemiology at Yerevan State Medical University and was ranked top resident in his graduating class. During his time at YSMU he worked with the WHO and the Armenian Ministry of Health. While employed at YSMU Robert taught medical students and medical professionals in infection control as well

as infectious disease epidemiology, of which tuberculosis was a topic. Robert also brings to Heartland international experience. He worked with the Armenian Center for Integration and Democratization in Yerevan, Armenia as in International Representative presenting at international conferences on behalf of the organization. Robert is fluent in the languages of English and Armenian.

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**The MISSION of the Heartland National TB Center is to build capacity with our partners. We will share expertise in the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis by: developing and implementing cutting-edge trainings, delivering expert medical consultation, providing technical assistance, and designing innovative educational and consultative products.**

Introducing....continued from page 2

## Introducing—Edgar Salinas, BBA



Edgar Salinas joined the staff as a **Web Coordinator** in January 2011. He comes to Heartland from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) where he received his BA in business with a minor in information systems in 2010. Edgar previously held a student position with UTSA Campus Recreation Center as the Marketing Coordinator and Web Developer. During his tenure he received an overall employee of the year award and received a place of Honorable Mention at the 2010 National

Intramural-Recreational Sports Association Creative Excellence Awards for the UTSA Campus Recreation Website. Edgar brings to Heartland substantial experience in web development, on-line marketing, database management, technical writing, and analysis and design. Edgar is also fluent in Spanish and English.

## Introducing—Jessica Waguespack, CHES



Jessica Waguespack joined the staff as an **Education Specialist** in January 2011. She received her BS in Health Science with a concentration in Community Health from Stephen F. Austin State University in 2008. In 2008 she became CHES (Certified Health Education Specialist) certified. CHES demonstrates that she contains the skills and knowledge of the Seven Areas of Responsibility of Health Educators. Jessica is currently in her second year of graduate school with Texas Women's University

receiving a MS with a concentration in Worksite Health. Jessica began her health professional career as a health educator for Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital, located in Nacogdoches, Texas. Her main responsibilities were to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate worksite wellness programs for Memorial Hospital. She also developed educational programs for employees and patients of Memorial Hospital as well as the Nacogdoches community; focusing on heart and stroke health. Jessica worked on the ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation & Environmental change) initiative of improving policy, systems, and environmental changes for a healthier community. While at Memorial Hospital she trained staff (LVN's, RN's, and Technicians) to be CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) certified. In three short months, Jessica trained over 300 hospital employees. Jessica was part of the Leadership Nacogdoches program, the Mental Health Collaborative in Nacogdoches, the Healthy Nacogdoches Coalition, and the Texas Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke Partnership.

The **VISION** of Heartland National TB Center is to provide *excellence, expertise, innovation* in training, medical consultation, and product development to reduce the impact of tuberculosis in our region.

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## New Documents from MDH for Management of Patients with Known or Suspected Active TB Disease



The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Program recently developed three documents related to the management of patients with known or suspected active TB disease. These documents are intended for use by healthcare providers, infection preventionists, discharge planners, and local and state TB Program staff.

"Recommendations for Home Isolation of Potentially Infectious Confirmed or Suspected Cases of Tuberculosis (TB) Disease" provides guidance for discharging patients to home or a congregate setting and discharging patients to settings where immunocompromised persons and children younger than five years old live.

Download at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/isolatingpat.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/isolatingpat.pdf).

"Tuberculosis Hospital Discharge Planning Checklist" lists action steps that should be taken before discharging a TB case or suspect from the hospital. This checklist is designed to ensure continuity of care by facilitating communication between inpatient facilities and the patient's local public health agency.

Download at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/discharge.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/discharge.pdf).

"Home Respiratory Precautions for Patients with Potentially Infectious Tuberculosis" provides information for patients on how to maintain respiratory isolation at home. This fact sheet, available in English, KaRen, Somali, and Spanish, should be used in conjunction with patient teaching performed by healthcare providers and public health nurses.

Download at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/factsheets/homeresp.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/tb/factsheets/homeresp.pdf).

Contact the MDH TB Prevention and Control Program at 651-201-5414 with questions.



## NTNC Announcement

On behalf of The National TB Nurse Coalition (NTNC), Dawn Ferrell, president of NTNC, would like to take this opportunity to provide you with information about the organization and invite you to become a member. The NTNC is a strong and active organization that plays an integral role in providing a collective voice for nurses working in TB control activities as well as an advocate for TB elimination throughout the nation.

### HOW TO JOIN NTNC:

NTNC membership is open to all nurses who work in TB control programs, case manage TB patients, or are retired TB control staff members. All nurses who join as Associate Members of NTCA are members of the NTNC Section unless they do not wish to be so included. As a member you will receive Tuberculosis Nursing: A Comprehensive Guide to Patient Care (one per member), contact information for all TB nurses nationwide, and the opportunity to impact TB control and advocacy issues nationwide!

### NTNC MISSION:

To advise and support the TB control officials of state, local, and territorial governments by providing a coordinated nursing perspective on issues vital to the success of TB prevention and control programs.

## 2011 HNTC Training Calendar

Date	Course	Location
April 6–8	TB Intensive	San Antonio, Texas
April 26 12:00–1:30 PM CST	NJMS Global Institute MDR ENM Call	WEBINAR: Contact HNTC for more information
April 27	Substance Abuse and TB	Springfield, Illinois
May 5, 12, 19 12:00–1:30 PM CST	Webinar Series (3 parts): Behavioral Aspects of Substance Abuse: Impact on Managing TB	WEBINAR: Contact HNTC for more information
June 1–2	Contact Investigation	Independence, Missouri
June 14–17	NTCA / NTNC Conference	Atlanta, Georgia

\*\*The calendar will be updated in every newsletter as well as on the website to show trainings that have been confirmed\*\*

Please visit our website: <http://www.heartlandntbc.org/training.asp> to find detailed information concerning registration and participation. Proposed topics are subject to change; check website for the latest updates.

Products from the Heartland National TB Center are available for download at: <http://www.heartlandntbc.org/products.asp>

TBeat Volume 6 Issue 1 March 2011



*Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria.

MMWR / March 25, 2011 / Vol. 60 / No. 11

### Trends in Tuberculosis – United States, 2010

In 2010, a total of 11,181 tuberculosis cases were reported in the United States, an incidence of 3.6 cases per 100,000 population, which was a decline of 3.9% from 2009 and the lowest rate recorded since national reporting began in 1953. This report summarizes provisional 2010 data from the National TB Surveillance System and describes trends since 1993.

2011 TRAINING CALENDAR

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