



For Immediate Release:

World TB Day, March 24, 2016

OTTAWA (March 24, 2016) World TB Day 2016: **“Unite to End TB”**

March 24th each year commemorates that day in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the tubercle bacillus and demonstrated it to be the cause of tuberculosis, a major worldwide cause of illness and death since the dawn of civilization. In 2016, TB remains a major global health challenge with 9 million new TB cases and 1.5 million deaths each year. In 2016, tuberculosis remains the leading cause of death from an infectious disease in the world and there are still 3 deaths every minute from this treatable and curable disease. In Canada, although the risk is relatively low, there are still approximately 1600 new cases identified each year. TB does not discriminate; it is spread through the air and can affect anyone as highlighted by recent Canadian news reports.¹

Of the 9 million individuals with new infections each year, one-third do not get the care they require. Many go undiagnosed. Some are untreated while others are not officially linked to national TB programs. Many of these will die or may receive unknown or non-standardized treatment. Unsupervised and potentially inadequate treatment provides the breeding ground for drug-resistant tuberculosis, while inadequately treated individuals may remain an ongoing threat to infect others.

While progress has been made overall in battle against TB, the number of new cases each year is declining at an unacceptably low rate and the linkage to organized care remains an ongoing problem. There is a critical need to address deficiencies and weaknesses in health systems. Sustained, predictable funding, political engagement and partnership are all required to ensure that those with TB in the poorest communities around the world can be reached, diagnosed and treated. Access to high quality diagnostics and medications is critical.

An ambitious Global Plan to End TB 2016-2020 has recently been launched. It defines the actions and resources that will be needed to achieve the goal of ending the global TB epidemic by 2030. This plan will drive the development of new tools to diagnose, treat and prevent TB, including development of new vaccines. In

¹ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/tuberculosis-megabus-toronto-montreal-1.3452528>

concrete terms, this plan aims to ensure that 29 million people are treated, that 10 million lives are saved and that 45 million people are prevented from getting TB.

The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada stated in 2013 that we must, “Continue to participate in international activities to reduce the global burden of disease and work towards addressing the underlying determinants of health globally and domestically.”²

Tuberculosis is epidemic in much of the world and remains a global health security threat. Koch’s discovery in 1882 led the way to diagnostics and cure for TB. World TB Day is a call to action for Governments and Ministers of Health to ensure stable funding and to eliminate barriers for the 3 million people per year who do not have access to modern care and cure of their TB.

About AMMI Canada

Preventing, diagnosing, and treating infectious diseases

The Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (AMMI) Canada is the national association that represents physicians, clinical microbiologists and researchers specializing in the fields of medical microbiology and infectious diseases.

Through promotion of the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of human infectious diseases and by our involvement in education, research, clinical practice and advocacy, AMMI Canada aims to serve and educate the public and also to enhance the career opportunities of its members through professional development and advocacy initiatives.

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² <http://publichealth.gc.ca/CPHOREport>