



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STANDS “UNITED TO STOP TB” DURING ANNUAL WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY, MARCH 24

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is proud to join partner entities and individuals across the globe to observe *World Tuberculosis (TB) Day* on March 24. This year’s World Tuberculosis Day theme is “United to Stop TB,” recognizing that it takes a team approach involving public health workers engaging collaboratively with community partners to prevent and control tuberculosis.

On this day in 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of the bacteria that causes TB infection. This microbe, most often found in the lungs, can spread to other parts of the body and can be transmitted in the air by a person sick with the disease. Although many people believe that TB is a disease of the past, it is still a leading killer among infectious diseases worldwide.

This year, DOH recognizes several of our many outstanding community partners in observance of this event: Dr. Scott Hoskinson, Infectious Disease Specialist, Maui; Dr. Charlie Sonido, Internist, Oahu and Kauai; Dr. Mathew Bankowski, Diagnostic Lab Service, Oahu; and Ms. Henedine Smith, RN, Infection Control Officer, Kuakini Medical Center, Oahu.

“The individuals we’re highlighting today have shown exemplary commitment to eliminating the threat of TB in our islands, and we thank them for their service,” said Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler. “Hawaii has the second highest state rate of TB in the United States, with approximately 125 cases of active tuberculosis per year, which emphasizes the need for their critical work each day.”

TB cases often occur in people born in countries with high rates of the disease, and they arrive in Hawaii with inactive or latent TB that becomes active years later. The department’s TB program provides active case management, directly observes patients taking TB antibiotics to assure adequate treatment, and evaluates persons exposed to patients with infectious TB. Consequently, rates of transmission of TB infection to others, treatment failures, and development of secondary drug resistance to TB is low.

TB is a disease that is commonly seen in the lungs and can be spread from person-to-person through the air. When a person with active TB disease in the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, tiny drops containing *M. tuberculosis* may be spread into the air. If another person inhales these drops, there is a chance they may 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.

DOH's Tuberculosis Control Program is part of the Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing Division. Its mission is to reduce the incidence of tuberculosis in the state by providing effective prevention, detection, treatment, and educational services. For more information on tuberculosis or the program's services and activities, call (808) 832-5731 or visit [health.hawaii.gov/tb](http://health.hawaii.gov/tb).

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