



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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Towards TB elimination: ECDC and ERS introduce new guidelines on tuberculosis care in Europe

Today, the European Respiratory Society (ERS) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) publish their jointly developed European Union Standards for Tuberculosis Care (ESTC). The 21 patient-centred standards aim to guide clinicians and public health workers to ensure optimal diagnosis, treatment and prevention of tuberculosis (TB) in Europe – with nearly 74,000 reported TB cases in the EU/EEA in 2010 clearly showing that tuberculosis remains a public health challenge across the region¹.

The new EU-specific guidelines were developed by a panel of 30 experts and aim to bridge current gaps in the case management of TB that were identified in a recent survey². In the process, the ERS has taken the lead in developing the clinically related standards and ECDC has developed the public health related standards. The ESTC are based on the same recommendations as the [International Standards for TB Care](#) (ISTC), but feature additional supplements and replacement information relevant for healthcare providers in the EU.

EU-specific recommendations from the new guidelines include:

- All people showing signs, symptoms, history or risk factors linked with tuberculosis should be examined for TB.
- All people diagnosed with TB should undergo drug-susceptibility testing in a laboratory setting to rule out drug-resistance and help combat the growing number of multidrug-resistant cases of TB (MDR TB).
- Patients with, or highly likely to have, tuberculosis caused by drug-resistant organisms (especially MDR TB) should be treated for at least 20 months, with the recommended intensive phase of treatment being 8 months.
- Clinicians should ensure that all newly admitted patients who are suspected of having infectious TB are subject to respiratory isolation until their diagnosis is confirmed or excluded following an appropriate infection control plan.

The guidelines also include an additional section on how policymakers and healthcare professionals can adopt and introduce the recommendations into a healthcare setting.

“Multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant TB have gained a foothold in the EU: 4.6% of the TB patients were diagnosed with MDR TB in 2010 and only 30% of the MDR TB patients notified in 2008 have been successfully treated and the proportion of XDR TB patients increased from 8.2% to 13.2% from 2009 to 2010³”, warns **ECDC Director Marc Sprenger**. “We have to do better than that and actively prevent drug-resistant TB. To do this, the new EU Standards offer hands-on and easy-to-use advice tailored to the needs of the EU/EEA. It is every TB patient's right to receive the best of care and we have a responsibility towards EU/EEA citizens to prevent any more spread of TB, MDR and XDR TB.”

President-elect of the European Respiratory Society, Professor Francesco Blasi, who is also an author of the new guidelines, said: “Across Europe, TB poses a serious threat to public health. With accurate prevention, diagnosis and treatment, we can diminish this threat. Standards for TB care in Europe are still below an acceptable level and recent surveys have highlighted gaps in the case management of TB. The new guidelines included key recommendations, relevant to a European audience, which can help reduce the spread of TB and improve patient care.”

The publication of the guidelines coincides with the start of a special review series in the European Respiratory Journal, looking at the current state of TB in Europe. The series begins today with an editorial and paper on the prevalence of inappropriate tuberculosis treatment regimens. Four more papers will follow in upcoming editions of the Journal.

The European Respiratory Society has also recently launched (early March) the European Forum for TB Innovation with the aims to identify and highlight the gaps, challenges and needs in innovating and optimising European and global TB control.

Notes to editors:

General information on tuberculosis:

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one third of the world's population is infected with tuberculosis and, in Europe, TB kills 7 people every hour⁴. The main form of this disease is caused by infection with the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that destroys patients' lung tissue. The infection can then spread through the air as patients cough up bacteria which can be inhaled by others.

To view the ESTC online please visit: <http://erj.ersjournals.com/content/early/recent>

For further information and comment, please contact:

Lauren Anderson, European Lung Foundation, lauren.anderson@europeanlung.org or the **ECDC press office** on: Tel: +46 (0) 8 586 01 678 or E-mail: press@ecdc.europa.eu

[The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\)](#) is an EU agency tasked with identifying assessing and communicating threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. It supports the work of public health authorities in the EU and EEA/EFTA Member States.

[All about the ECDC TB programme](#)

The European Respiratory Society (ERS) is the leading professional organisation in its field in Europe. It has over 10,000 members and counting in over 100 countries. The ERS seeks to alleviate suffering from respiratory disease and promote lung health through research, sharing of knowledge and through medical and public education. **The European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)** is the official journal of the European Respiratory Society (ERS).

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Authors: Migliori GB, Zellweger JP, Abubakar I, Ibraim E, Caminero J.A, De Vries G, D'Ambrosio L, Centis R, Sotgiu G, Menegale O, Kliiman K, Aksamit T, Cirillo D.M, Danilovits M, Dara M, Dheda K, Dinh-Xuan A.T, Kluge H, Lange C, Leimane V, Loddenkemper R, Nicod L, Raviglione M.C, Spanevello A, Thomsen V.Ø, Villar M, Wanlin M, Wedzicha J.A., Zumla A, Blasi F, Huitric E, Sandgren A, Manissero D

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¹ [ECDC/WHO Euro: Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2010](#)

² [Development of a standardised tool to survey MDR-/XDR-TB case management in Europe](#)

³ [ECDC/WHO Euro: Tuberculosis surveillance and monitoring in Europe 2010](#)

⁴ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/communicable-diseases/tuberculosis>