

WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

News Release

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NEW ONLINE TUBERCULOSIS COURSE FOR PHYSICIANS PILOTED BY WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

To mark World TB Day on Saturday (March 24), the World Medical Association is to start piloting a unique web-based training course for physicians to better diagnose, prevent and treat multi-drug resistant (MDR) tuberculosis.

The course will be piloted first among physicians in South Africa, before being extended in the summer to Estonia and the Philippines and then to physicians across the world. The WMA has developed the course in collaboration with the Foundation for Professional Development of the South African Medical Association and the Norwegian Medical Association. The project is being co-ordinated by the German Medical Association.

The course is based on new guidelines from the World Health Organisation on the management of MDR TB and will allow physicians to train online at their own pace. The web based text will be available in several languages. Physicians who take part in the course may receive credits as part of their continuing medical education programme. The course has been made possible by an educational grant from Eli Lilly.

The WMA, with the Norwegian Medical Association, already runs a highly successful web-based course on human rights and ethics for prison doctors.

Dr Otmar Kloiber, Secretary General of the WMA, said:

'Not enough physicians know how to treat multi-drug resistant tuberculosis or else they treat it incorrectly. Controlling and treating these forms of TB are particularly important and challenging. This specialised training course will help physicians improve treatment and surveillance, the reactivation of screening and follow-up programmes and the large-scale application of strictly supervised daily treatment of TB.'

'Every year almost two million people die from this disease and there are more than 400,000 new cases of MDR TB. If this is not properly managed, we risk facing an even more challenging public health issue. Yet multi drug resistant TB is curable and it is cost effective to treat.'

Dr Ernesto Jaramillo, from the World Health Organisation, said:

'Multidrug resistant tuberculosis and extensive drug resistant tuberculosis are serious threats to TB control globally. One of the major hurdles to scale up the programmatic management of multidrug resistant TB is the limited number of health care workers properly trained. The online training course produced by the WMA and funded by Lilly, is very much needed and will certainly contribute to fill a gap in the training of health workers.'

Dr Steven Paul, executive vice president of science and technology at Eli Lilly and Company, said the company was pleased to contribute to the efforts of WMA.

'Lilly hopes that its funding of WMA's technology-based learning will provide important assistance to the thousands of physicians around the world involved in fighting TB. Our funding of WMA's efforts are a part of a broader investment by Lilly to work with organizations around the world to create a long-term, sustainable effort to improve tuberculosis control and treatment.'

Eli Lilly form part of the MDR-TB partnership of organisations working together to improve tuberculosis control worldwide and supporting the Global Plan to Stop TB 2006-2015.

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Note to Editors: World TB Day, on the theme of 'TB Anywhere is TB Everywhere', is designed to build public awareness that tuberculosis today remains an epidemic in much of the world, causing the deaths of several million people each year, mostly in the third world. 24 March commemorates the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch astounded the scientific community by announcing that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus. At the time of Koch's announcement in Berlin, TB was raging through Europe and the Americas, causing the death of one out of every seven people. Koch's discovery opened the way toward diagnosing and curing tuberculosis.

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The World Medical Association is the independent confederation of national medical associations from more than 80 countries and represents more than eight million physicians. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.