

Fiji: Tuberculosis A Threat to Fiji

Ropate Valemei

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The Journal of Public Health report for Fijis Ministry of Health, which was released in 2012, described TB as still constituting a major threat to the countrys population. According to the Ministry of Health Project officer for TB, Asenaca Mataika, the most recent data from the World Health Organization Global Report 2011 showed that Fiji had an incidence rate of 27 per 100,000 people and a prevalence rate of 40 per 100,000 people. Mataika stated that in 2010, there were 191 active TB cases recorded by the national program, and in 2011, there were 213. Of the 213 cases in 2011, 24 percent were in the Central and Eastern Divisions, 41 in the Western Division, and 17 in the Northern Division. People with low socioeconomic status, poor housing, and unhealthy lifestyles who live mainly in semi-urban and densely populated areas were the most commonly affected by TB. Also, those in the most productive age group between ages 15 and 55 years were also heavily affected. Males were more affected than females, and 7 to 11 percent of the total cases were children under age 15 years. Mataika said that the treatment success rate of new smear-positive TB cases in 2010 was 67 percent. Of the 33 percent of patients that were not successfully treated, six percent had died, 24 percent defaulted on treatment, and 3 percent were lost to follow-up. Mataika commented that other co-morbid conditions such as TB/HIV co-infection and TB combined with diabetes mellitus were challenges that the National TB Program needed to address to fully control TB. She explained that persons with symptoms of TB should be investigated and that any TB suspect could be referred to the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short course) centers at Tamavua, Lautoka, and Labasa hospitals.

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