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San Joaquin County Public Health Services

## San Joaquin County Public Health Services Recognizes World TB Day

San Joaquin County Public Health Services (PHS) recognizes World TB Day, a day to raise awareness about the impact of tuberculosis (TB) around the globe. This year, World TB Day, with the theme 'Yes! We can end TB!', aims to inspire hope and collaboration and encourage political and economic commitment to combating and ending the TB epidemic. World TB Day is observed each year on March 24, honoring the date Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of the bacillus that causes TB, in 1882.

World TB Day is commemorated to show solidarity with the millions of people who fall ill with TB each year and pay tribute to the millions who have lost their lives to this disease. "TB is not a disease of the past", said **Dr. Maggie Park, San Joaquin County Public Health Officer**. "It is a persistent disease that can affect anyone, anywhere, but it can also be prevented and cured. People should know their TB status, and they should know the risk factors, because early testing and treatment can prevent progression to active disease."

TB is spread through the air, from person to person, when someone with active TB coughs and those around them become infected when they breathe in the bacteria. Some people will live with TB infection without ever developing active TB disease. This is called latent TB, and 1 in 10 people with latent TB who are not treated will progress to active TB. Those with active TB will have symptoms such as cough, chest pain, fever, weight loss, and fatigue, and they can continue to spread the disease.

People who are more at risk for TB include:

- Close contacts of a person with infectious TB disease
- Persons who have immigrated from areas of the world with high rates of TB
- Children less than 5 years of age who have a positive TB test
- Groups with high rates of TB transmission, such as homeless persons, injection drug users, and persons with HIV infection
- Persons who work or reside with people who are at high risk for TB in facilities or institutions such as hospitals, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, nursing homes, and residential homes for those with HIV
- Persons with medical conditions that weaken the immune system

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In 2021, 10.6 million people fell ill with TB globally, and 1.6 million people died of TB. In addition, 7,882 new cases of TB were reported in the U.S. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic strained TB prevention and control services, there are strong speculations of TB underdiagnosis, which means that the actual numbers might be higher.

Ending TB will require tackling health inequities. Persons with TB are among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of any community. They are facing stigma, discrimination, and barriers to accessing care. Another requirement will be a dual approach of maintaining and strengthening current TB control priorities, while increasing efforts to identify and treat latent TB infection, especially in populations at increased risk of TB disease.

PHS conducts TB surveillance, provides consultation to health care providers, hospital infection control practitioners and school nurses and raises awareness of communities on TB. Moreover, we provide case management services for suspected and diagnosed TB cases. In 2022, PHS received 1,534 reports of positive TB tests and managed 33 new cases of active TB in San Joaquin County.

World TB Day is our opportunity to thank all the public health workers, health care providers and community partners who are at the forefront of the fight to end TB. It is a time to recognize the critical role we all play and renew our commitment to the collective goal of 'Yes! We can end TB!'.

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