

National Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey of Timor-Leste

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The Ministry of Health's National Tuberculosis (TB) Program in collaboration with Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is launching the National Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey.

TB is a major cause of disease and death in Timor-Leste, which has amongst the highest rates of TB in the world. However, the true burden of TB disease in Timor-Leste is unknown, as many people with TB are not diagnosed and treated.

The National TB Prevalence Survey aims to determine the full burden of TB disease in Timor-Leste. This will be achieved by offering TB screening to up to 20,000 people from 50 randomly selected sites across the country.

TB screening includes a short questionnaire about TB symptoms and chest x-ray. Those who report TB symptoms or have an abnormal finding on their chest x-ray will have additional testing for TB and will be referred to their local community health centre for further investigation and treatment.

Co-lead of Menzies Timor-Leste projects, Dr Josh Francis, says the National TB Prevalence Survey is an important project which will help inform national efforts to work towards ending TB in Timor-Leste.

Dr Francis said, "the National TB Prevalence Survey will provide important new information about the true extent of the TB epidemic. This will help the Ministry of Health and its partners to develop the best strategies to address this significant public health challenge."

Head of Timor-Leste's National TB Program, Sr. Costantino Lopes, says that the Ministry of Health's collaboration with Menzies has enabled them to undertake the survey, which has been a long-term priority for the National TB Program.

"The National TB Program implements TB interventions based on an estimate of the TB burden which has remained mostly unchanged for the last 20 years. The National TB Prevalence Survey will more accurately determine the current burden of TB in Timor-Leste."

"We are grateful for the support of Menzies to implement the TB survey, and I encourage all of those in selected communities to participate in the TB screening," said Sr. Costantino.

The National TB Prevalence Survey is funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of Australia's \$242 million commitment to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

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Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses, Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.