A NEW ERA OF TB SKIN TESTING: PHARMACISTS AS PUBLIC HEALTH PARTNERS

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Background
- New Mexico has a low population density which creates barriers to providing accessible public health care services throughout the state.
- In addition, decreases in public health dollars and lack of nursing staff have adversely impacted the ability to provide TSTs (tuberculin skin tests) for low risk populations (i.e. school/work requirement and change of immigration status).

Objectives
- Increase availability of TB skin tests for work/school requirements
- Provide quality standardized training for pharmacist to accurately place, read and interpret the TST
- Ensure referrals to public health of high risk populations presenting for TSTs at pharmacies throughout NM

Methods
- The NM TB program, New Mexico Pharmacists Association and the New Mexico Board of Pharmacy partnered to create a plan to train pharmacists to administer and read TSTs, and coordinate with public health.
- NM TB program worked with Heartland National TB Center to provide a regional webinar on September 8, 2011: "Understanding the TB Skin Test: A Primer for Non-TB staff."

Results
- There were 61 registered participants in the webinar. The program provided on-site TST practicum for hands on experience for pharmacists at locations throughout the state. Four (4) sites received TST training for a total of thirty-nine (39) pharmacists.
- The Board of Pharmacy adopted as protocol a form recommended by the NM TB program when administering the TST (i.e. Tuberculin Skin Testing Health History and Consent Form – see below).
- In a survey sent out by the NM Pharmacists Association participating pharmacists indicated a confidence in their ability to provide this service to the public.

TST Health History and Consent Form

Recommendations and Next Steps
- The TBP will work with the NM Pharmacists association to plan future practicums as the need arises.
- Major retail commercial pharmacies typically have a high turnover of pharmacists that will require frequent TST practicums that could be challenging for the limited TB staff to accommodate.

Limitations
- A small number (39) pharmacists have completed the TST practicum.
- A limited number of TSTs (100+) have been performed throughout the state with no positive TSTs reported.

Summary
- This collaborative effort has successfully increased access to TSTs and the diagnosis and treatment of LTBI.
- Pharmacists have contacted the local health offices with referrals when clients presented with signs or symptoms of TB disease.
- In the era of declining public health dollars all avenues of collaboration to ensure sustained TB prevention efforts should be explored.