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Why contact tracing in TB is important for Pacific islands

Janet O’Connora, Kerri Vineyb and Axel Wiegandtb
aSecretariat of the Pacific Community, BP D5 Noumea Cédez., 98841 Noumea, New Caledonia
bSecretariat of the Pacific Community, B.P. D5, 98848 Noumea, New Caledonia
axelw@spc.int

Pacific islands discussed in this presentation refer to 20 Pacific island countries and territories (PICT) with a total population of just over 3 million people. Overall TB rate increased from 49 to 53 per 100,000 population between 2000 and 2006 with TB rates varying widely between countries from less than 10 per 100,000 in Cook Islands (~15,000 pop) to 400 per 100,000 in Kiribati (~93,000 pop). More than 30% of TB cases are found in the age group 0-24 years suggesting on going active transmission in the community.

PICTs endorsed and implemented DOTS strategy in 2000 and achieved over 85% Treatment success rate and 70% Case detection rate in 2005. Despite good performance, active transmission of the disease continues to increase. To date, no formal contact investigation has been performed in any country and there are no standard treatment protocols on INH prophylaxis.

Given the increasing incidence of TB in children in the island communities and the lack of a standardized approach to contact investigation, a well designed approach was recommended beyond DOTS in selected countries where DOTS programs are well established and where resources are available.

In October 2007, a pilot training course was conducted to teach contact investigation skills to participants from 10 Pacific island countries. Participants who attended the course helped establish guidelines and recommendations for the region. Course evaluations indicated participants gained knowledge and skills that could help them implement contact investigation. This course could be taught in other resource limited regions to implement contact investigation.

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