

November 3, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

As clinicians and scientists engaged in the domestic and global response to tuberculosis, we urge you to formally release the Plan to Combat Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis that your administration announced earlier this year and to follow release of the Plan with a budget request that will support its implementation.

Amid an alarming growth in global incidence of the disease, now rivaling HIV as a global killer, the current response to drug-resistant tuberculosis leaves the majority of patients undiagnosed and untreated, and the world community vulnerable to this often deadly infection. For those patients who are treated, the 18-to-24 month regimen is grueling, often with long-term side effects ranging from psychosis to permanent hearing loss. Here in the United States, a single case of drug-resistant tuberculosis can subsume a state TB program's entire budget, compromising other important TB elimination activities and leaving programs ill-equipped to provide adequate support to patients.

Growing drug resistance challenges the decades-old TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools that we have. Financing for basic research to improve our understanding of TB pathogenesis, for clinical trial capacity to test the effectiveness of critically needed new treatments and for the development of an effective vaccine falls far short of what is needed.

Mr. President, America's leadership in combating infectious diseases and advancing biomedical research is unparalleled and has made a profound difference in the lives of millions of people. Global leadership to respond to drug-resistant tuberculosis is long overdue. A plan is needed now, complete with research and development and programmatic goals and outcomes and a proposed budget, beginning in fiscal year 2017, that will ensure its implementation and success. We urge you to publicly release the National Action Plan to Combat Drug Resistant TB as soon as possible to begin to halt the continued global spread of this deadly disease.

We stand ready to work with you to eliminate this global threat. Thank you for your consideration.

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