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Breakthrough tuberculosis drug now available through Canadian study

Taima TB 3HP study launched in Iqaluit and Ottawa

MARCH 24, 2016 – IQALUIT AND OTTAWA – Tuberculosis (TB) is a major public health threat in Canada's North, with an incidence rate up to 40 times greater than the national average. Now residents of Iqaluit and Ottawa can enroll in a study of a new drug combination that reduces the treatment of latent TB from nine months to 12 weeks.

The study, Taima TB 3HP, is led by Dr. Gonzalo Alvarez, a lung specialist for The Ottawa Hospital and Nunavut and associate professor at the University of Ottawa. It is funded by Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

“Over the last five years we’ve made important progress in raising awareness of TB in Iqaluit and improving diagnosis, but treatment for latent TB remains a challenge because the current therapy takes so long,” says Dr. Alvarez. “I’m delighted that we will now be able to offer people a safe and effective treatment for latent TB that takes much less time to complete.”

“The Government of Canada is pleased to invest in this important study, which will make this new promising tuberculosis treatment available in Nunavut, where TB is an ongoing public health threat,” says the Honourable Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P. “Through collaborative community-based initiatives such as the Taima TB 3HP study, we will continue to identify real solutions to address this curable disease.”

“The Government of Nunavut is working collaboratively with our partners toward reduction of the rates of TB in Nunavut. Thus far, we have accomplished a great deal through increased education, surveillance and staffing,” says Monica Ell-Kanayuk, Government of Nunavut’s Health Minister. “The Taima 3HP TB study is investigating a promising advance in the treatment of TB infection.”

“NTI is pleased to support this study,” says James Eetoolook, Vice-President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI). “The new treatment has proven to be effective in treating latent TB in other studies. The current therapy is long and significantly impacts the lives of individual Inuit.”

“High rates of TB among Inuit continues to be a major concern,” says Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). “ITK is collaborating with partners and stakeholders to raise awareness for the need for more effective approaches to TB prevention, control and care for Inuit. I commend Dr. Alvarez and team for their work on the Taima 3HP TB Study which offers a new approach to treatment.”

“TB changed my life,” says Margaret Ishulutak, a woman from Iqaluit who was diagnosed with active TB in 2014. “I had to be quarantined for four weeks and I had to take hundreds of pills over the course of



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many months to get rid of it. I'm very glad that Dr. Alvarez and his team are doing research that may help us prevent this terrible disease."

The study will encompass 225 participants with latent TB in Iqaluit, enrolled through Iqaluit Public Health. There will be a parallel arm to the project in Ottawa through The Ottawa Hospital TB program.

For information on enrollment in Iqaluit, please contact Iqaluit Public Health services. For information on enrollment in Ottawa, please ask your physician for a referral to The Ottawa Hospital TB Program.

For more information on the study, please visit:

<http://www.ohri.ca/newsroom/photos/uploads/Taima%20TB%203HP%20Backgrounder.pdf>

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