

EMBARGOED UNTIL MARCH 24, 2016, 12:01 A.M. ET

Backgrounder on TB and Taima TB 3HP study

About TB

TB is a bacterial disease that can cause chronic cough, fever and other symptoms. If left untreated, active TB is highly contagious and can be fatal. Latent TB is a “sleeping” form of the disease. People with latent TB show no symptoms, but have a 10 per cent risk of developing active TB, so treating the latent form of the disease is crucial for prevention.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), one third of the world’s population has latent TB and nearly 10 million people came down with the active form of the disease in 2014. While the overall incidence of [TB in Canada](#) is low (1,640 active cases in 2013), Inuit are disproportionately affected, even compared to other Canadian born indigenous peoples. The TB incidence rate in Canada’s North is up to 40 times greater than the national average. Foreign-born people and homeless people in Canada also have a much higher rate of TB than other Canadians.

About treatment for latent TB

The current treatment for latent TB in Canada is a 60-year-old drug called isoniazid or INH, which must be taken over the course of nine months to be effective. Previous research has shown that only a third of people with latent TB in Iqaluit complete this recommended treatment.

In December of 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a new TB drug called rifapentine. When taken together with INH, this double drug regimen (called 3HP) can eliminate latent TB with once-a-week dosing for 12 weeks. 3HP has been shown to be safe and effective in several studies, including a [clinical trial of nearly 8,000 people](#) published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2011.

About Taima TB 3HP

[Taima TB 3HP](#) will evaluate the feasibility of 3HP treatment for latent TB in Canada’s north – measuring how many people successfully complete the treatment. It will encompass 225 participants with latent TB in Iqaluit. There will be a parallel arm to the project in Ottawa through The Ottawa Hospital TB program.

Taima TB 3HP is funded by Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, with additional support from Ottawa’s Department of Medicine (affiliated with The Ottawa Hospital and the University of Ottawa). The manufacturer of 3HP has no role in the study and did not provide any funding for it. None of the researchers have a financial interest in this study.

Health Canada has approved the use of 3HP for the Taima TB 3HP study, and the study has been approved by the Ottawa Health Sciences Network Research Ethics Board.

Taima TB 3HP is part of [Taima TB](#), a research program that has increased awareness of TB and improved diagnosis in Nunavut over the last five years.