

Leveraging COVID19 for Successful TB Outreach

Over 50% of tuberculosis (TB) cases in California arise in Asian and Pacific Islander (API) persons.(1) San Diego, California, has one of the highest TB case rates in the state, and individuals born in the Philippines and Vietnam account for more than 25% of the county's TB cases. Furthermore, TB case rates for persons born in the Philippines and in Vietnam are nearly 20 times higher than for U.S.-born persons.(2) The vast majority of TB cases (>80%) are among persons with latent TB infection (LTBI) that progressed to active TB disease, so it is critical to intervene and treat LTBI to prevent active TB disease.(1) TB Free California is addressing TB-related health disparities among API communities throughout the state through collaboration with community organizations that expand outreach and increase awareness, screening, testing and treatment of LTBI.

In September 2020, the Collaboration for Action to Achieve Results toward the Elimination of TB (CARE TB) project was formed to create culturally and linguistically appropriate TB education for the San Diego County Filipino and Vietnamese communities. CARE TB is a private-public partnership consisting of two San Diego-based agencies (Champions for Health & the San Diego County TB and Refugee Health Branch) and is supported by TB Free California. CARE TB interventions were designed to take place in conjunction with COVID-19 vaccination clinics in communities with both a high burden of TB and COVID-19.

TB Free California support to the CARE TB project included:

1. Providing input and strategic direction for LTBI education activities
2. Designing LTBI education resources for providers and the community in critical languages to meet the needs of the community
3. Developing data collection tools for community and provider needs assessment surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups
4. Assisting in mini-grant applications to kickstart and sustain the project, reporting to funders, as well as presenting at meetings and conferences
5. Helping to recruit members into the advisory

Through this collaboration, TB Free California supported the education of >300 community members who attended COVID-19 vaccination clinics. TB Free California also championed the implementation of a community needs assessment among 183 community members and 26 providers serving Filipino and Vietnamese patients at risk for TB. The community needs assessment showed low TB awareness among Filipino and Vietnamese participants, with only 36% of respondents having knowledge of TB risk factors. However, nearly 50% wanted to learn more about LTBI and 19% expressed

interest in getting tested for LTBI. These results highlight important educational needs in the community, as well as opportunities to link individuals to care for LTBI testing and treatment. TB Free California also learned that a large majority (83%) of respondents preferred to receive TB education directly from doctors, instead of nurses or other health professionals. This highlights the continued importance of provider training and education to support discussions of LTBI with patients at risk. As a result of the project's success, CARE TB will continue on into the next phase to address the needs identified and provide further education. In the coming year, the lessons learned from the needs assessment will inform the development of new educational resources, as well launch new screening, testing and treatment activities for Vietnamese and Filipino individuals at risk for TB..

The project was designed to send positive messages of bringing people together to create social change, but it was also a message to support Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Youth contributed artwork and wrote SAAM prevention messages. Both adults and youths were able to see how the mural impacted the community in a positive way and increased community connection, while at the same time educating the community about sexual violence prevention. This collaboration helped pave the way for making a difference in their community by creating partnerships and building awareness. The youth involved in the project did not see their community as a place that was being claimed by vandals anymore; they saw themselves and others creating something beautiful and this allowed them to feel empowered to take back their community. Through this art, they were able to tell their stories and could envision themselves as future artists and not future gang members or perpetrators. The mural project provided a positive experience for community members and was an opportunity for community connectedness, increasing protective factors against sexual violence and other forms of violence.

Federal Fiscal Year 2021 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant Success Story by the Tuberculosis Free California Program

Footnotes

1. TB in California: 2020 Snapshot. Tuberculosis Control Branch. Feb 1, 2020. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/TB/CB-TB-Snapshot-2020.pdf>
2. Tuberculosis Control Branch, Report on Tuberculosis in California, 2019. California Department of Public Health, Richmond, CA. August 2020. https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/TB/CB_Report_2019.pdf