



Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
**Division of Disease Control**

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## ***Health Notification***

### **Unexpected Decline in Reported Tuberculosis Cases, 2009**

#### **March 19, 2010**

In the March 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 edition of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are reporting an unexpectedly large decline in reported Tuberculosis (TB) cases for 2009. Based on provisional data, a total of 11,540 TB cases were reported in the United States (US) compared with 12,905 cases in 2008, which is a 10.6% decline. The TB case rate declined 11.4% from 4.2 cases per 100,000 persons in 2008 to 3.8 per 100,000 in 2009. From 2000 to 2008, the average annual decline in case count has been 3.3%. The reported TB incidence rate in 2009 was the lowest recorded since national reporting began in 1953, and unexpectedly showed the greatest single year decline recorded.

In Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, the decline in reported TB cases was even greater. In Pennsylvania, TB cases decreased from 387 in 2008 to 234 in 2009 – a decrease of 39.5%. The TB case rate in Pennsylvania was 1.9 cases per 100,000 population, a decrease of 39.7% from the rate of 3.1 per 100,000 reported for 2008. In Philadelphia, a total of 98 TB cases were reported in 2009, a decrease of 39% from the 162 cases reported in 2008.

There are many possible explanations for the drop in reported TB cases, including improvements in TB control activities, changing immigration patterns, new immigration laws (resulting in fewer untreated TB cases immigrating), underreporting of confirmed cases, underdiagnosis of disease, and changes in patient access to medical care. All of these factors may have played a role.

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) is working with State and CDC TB Control Programs to further explore these hypotheses. **Clinicians, laboratorians, and healthcare facilities are reminded to remain vigilant in identifying TB cases, facilitating rapid diagnosis and therapy, and initiating timely notification of all confirmed and suspect cases to the local public Health Department.**

World TB Day is observed each year on March 24<sup>th</sup> to commemorate the date in 1882 when Robert Koch announced the discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacterium that causes tuberculosis (TB). Worldwide, TB remains one of the leading causes of death from infectious disease. World TB Day provides an opportunity for TB programs, nongovernmental organizations, and healthcare providers to describe problems and solutions related to the TB pandemic and to support worldwide TB control efforts. The U.S. theme for this year's observance is **TB Elimination: Together We Can!**

Additional information about World TB Day and CDC's TB elimination activities is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/events/worldtbday>. To report cases of TB to the Philadelphia Health Department, please call 215-685-6873 or fax 215-685-6477.

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Philadelphia Department of Public Health

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