

Commemorate progress, seize opportunities on World TB Day

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We commemorate World TB Day faced with unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the fight against a disease first named 134 years ago today. The tools developed in the years since, to prevent, detect, and cure the disease are not within the reach of everyone who needs them, nor are they adequate to the task at hand. Tuberculosis continues to go undiagnosed in children, people living with HIV, and people in resource-limited environments. Under the best of conditions treatment remains arduous, requiring a minimum of six months of daily pills with toxic side effects. The spread of multidrug-resistant strains of disease, including extensively drug-resistant strains, threatens the progress we have made. At the end of last year, the World Health Organization announced that tuberculosis had surpassed HIV as the leading infectious disease killer worldwide.

This is a time to redouble our efforts against the disease. The White House release of its National Action Plan for Combatting Drug Resistant Tuberculosis provides one opportunity to do so, but it must be supported with the resources necessary to implement its strategies and reach its targets. Robustly funded programming, research and development to find and use improved diagnostic tools, treatments and ultimately a vaccine can keep us from ever again losing ground in our fight against the disease. Having recognized and led the fight against tuberculosis, the United States has a chance now to lead the fight to the finish. This is a day to commemorate progress, and to recognize that it must continue.

The Center for Global Health Policy is a project of the IDSA Education and Research Foundation and HIV Medicine Association dedicated to promoting the effective use of U.S. funding for addressing the global HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics. The Center's blog Science Speaks offers news and analysis on the latest developments in HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB) and other relevant global health issues.