

Oakland Tribune

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Time now to keep TB under control

Thanks to the Tribune for the March 23 AP article about tuberculosis ("WHO circumspect in reporting global gains against TB").

I thought that the key phrase in there was "lack of access to existing treatments are a bigger killer worldwide than drug-resistant strains."

Although regular TB is treatable and over 90 percent of TB is not drug resistant, if TB patients stop taking their drugs before they are no longer infectious, the germ mutates.

Readers would probably like to hear more about the danger we face because of reduced funding to control and treat tuberculosis here in Alameda County. Extremely drug-resistant TB is here and the money it takes to treat it sucks up public health funding. Yet, public health budgets across the U.S. have been flat for five years and are now threatened with big cuts.

U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer has just introduced the Stop TB Act of 2007, which does provide some relief for TB control monies. I thank her for her leadership in that effort. She seems quite aware that TB needs both a local and global approach in testing and treatment.

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