



Public Health
England

18th March 2019

Dear General Practitioner,

World TB day 24 March 2019 – It's time to act

To mark World TB day 2019, I am writing to you on behalf of Public Health England South West Health Protection Team in my capacity as the chair of the South West South (Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset) TB network to raise awareness locally about TB.

Currently the South West is one of the worst performing regions in the country in terms of delay between TB symptoms onset and starting treatment. The 2018 annual TB report for England shows that 50% of all persons with pulmonary TB in the South West experience a delay of over four months before starting therapy.

Late presentation results in disease that is harder to treat, as well as increasing the risk of transmission in the community which requires complex contact tracing exercises.

We want to change this situation. We would particularly like to draw your attention to the changing demographic profile of TB patients. Although we still experience a high level of infection in those born abroad, we are seeing increased numbers of TB cases in the UK-born population. In particular, we are seeing more **UK born patients with social risk factors, such as homelessness, drug misuse and previous imprisonment**. These patients tend to present later with more advanced infectious disease. Any delay in diagnosis further compounds these issues.

Symptoms of active TB disease include:

- Fever
- Unexplained weight loss
- Night sweats
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Cough lasting 3 weeks
- Coughing up blood.

The last two symptoms above apply to pulmonary TB - however the constitutional symptoms above are also consistent with TB in other sites such as lymph nodes.

If you suspect that a patient has TB we would recommend that you quickly arrange a CXR, send 3x morning sputum for TB culture and contact your local TB service. The most reliable and timely indicator of infection is probably a CXR which will often demonstrate

pulmonary changes that have developed over receding years, rather than sputum specimens which may not contain bacteria that can be cultured at the time.

We have provided a list of TB services, including referral and contact tracing in South West South, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset:

Hospital	Phone
Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust	01392 406253
Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust	01803 655117
UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS PLYMOUTH NHS TRUST	01752 439 948
Northern Devon Health Care Trust	01271 311600
Cornwall Partnership Foundation Trust	01872 227255
Musgrove Park Hospital	01823 343462
Yeovil District Hospital	01935 38 4574
Royal Bournemouth Hospital	01202 704560 / 70
Dorset County Hospital	01305 254957

The Royal College of General Practitioners provides a free CPD online module which you may find helpful to update your knowledge about TB, it is available at:

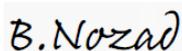
<http://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/info.php?popup=0&id=107>

The Truth about TB has a number of useful TB resources for healthcare professionals including a A5 referral prompt, a specialist nurse resource pack and a think suspect, refer desk card. For all resources follow the link below:

<https://www.thetruthabouttb.org/professionals/professional-education/>

Please contact the Health Protection team on 0300 303 8162 (option 1 then option 1) if you would like to discuss this letter or other matters.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Bayad Nozad
Consultant in Health Protection