

# WHO warns of drug-resistant TB

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The World Health Organization in Switzerland has warned of a new strain of tuberculosis that is rapidly spreading and cannot be treated with current drugs.

The organization said the extreme drug-resistant TB, or XDR-TB, has been identified in the United States, Eastern Europe and Africa, reported Britain's The Guardian newspaper.

Paul Nunn, head of the WHO TB resistance team, said the organization estimates that about 180,000 of the 9 million cases of TB in the world could be XDR-TB.

"This is raising the specter of something that we have been worried might happen for a decade -- the possibility of virtually untreatable TB," Nunn told the newspaper.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control said in March that there had been 64 recorded cases of XDR-TB in the country and 21 of those infected had died.

The disease also has major implications for the antiretroviral drug treatment program being rolled out for AIDS patients across Africa, where a great number of those patients die from TB.

"There is no point in investing hugely in ARV programs if patients are going to die a few weeks later from extreme drug-resistant tuberculosis," Nunn said.

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