

Drug-resistant TB on rise in Africa

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Drug-resistant tuberculosis strains in Africa could kill millions of people and render useless expensive drugs protecting HIV-infected patients from TB.

Health officials in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda report increasing numbers of cases of untreatable versions of the deadly disease, the London Telegraph said. If these strains gain a foothold, new -- and expensive -- drugs will be useless as patients infected with the AIDS-causing human immunodeficiency virus contract TB, health officials said.

Poor health services, overcrowded conditions, patients not completing their drug therapy and soaring HIV rates create a breeding ground for TB to mutate, the Telegraph said.

Health officials also battle the stigma that a TB diagnosis carries in countries where it is linked with HIV, the Telegraph said. The perception is that if someone has one condition, that person is assumed to have the other.

Because of this, officials said, many infected carriers aren't tested, the Telegraph reported. Of those who are and start taking the drugs, up to 10 percent fail to complete the course of treatment.

The World Health Organization said there is an estimated 50 million cases of the new multi-drug resistant TB worldwide.

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