

Experts say Toronto unprepared for TB

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Health experts warn there could be an outbreak of tuberculosis in Toronto, which reportedly lacks a centralized system of TB clinics.

The (Toronto) Star reported Sunday that about 400 of Canada's 1,600 active tuberculosis cases are in Toronto, a figure experts expect to rise given the city's growing immigrant community.

Critics say despite the growing risk of an outbreak, tuberculosis patients in the province are often seen by physicians with little experience in treating the disease, the newspaper reported.

"Many developing countries are doing a better job of managing TB than we do," said Dr. Michael Gardam, chief of infection control at the University Health Network and head of the tuberculosis clinic at Toronto Western Hospital.

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease spread person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and spreads bacteria into the air. More than one-third of the world's population is infected with the TB bacteria. About 10 percent of those go on to develop full-blown tuberculosis, it was reported.

"Toronto reflects the world, and the world is having an epidemic of TB," Gardam said. "If the world has a problem, then we have a problem."

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