

Scientists in hot pursuit of first new drug for global killer in 50 years

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This World TB Day (March 24), researchers at Sydney's Centenary Institute announce they have made an exciting discovery that could lead to the first new drug for Tuberculosis (TB) in almost fifty years.

Dr Nick West, Associate Faculty of the Mycobacterial group at Centenary, is looking at the genetics of TB in the hope they will reveal a way to reduce the impact of one of the deadliest diseases in the world.

Dr West, explains, "When someone is infected with TB they either become sick immediately or the disease stays inactive, latent."

"Unfortunately, the [antibiotics](#) we use to fight TB aren't effective against latent TB and can only be used when the disease becomes active. This is a major problem as 1 out of 10 people who have [latent TB](#) will develop the active disease, becoming sick and contagious."

Dr West and his team have made a vital discovery in the development of a new drug that could cure TB in the latent stage. If the project succeeds, it will be the first new treatment for TB since 1962.

This is exciting news given that TB kills almost 2 million people each year. One third of the world's population, or two billion people, are infected with TB. Every second of every day another person is infected.

And worse, TB is at Australia's doorstep with the fastest growing incidence of the disease occurring in South East Asia. Luckily, the

Centenary Institute, Australasia's largest TB research facility, is mounting a winning fight against this global killer.

Dr West explains, "We have investigated a protein that is essential for TB to survive and we have had some success in developing a drug that will inhibit this [protein](#). Our goal over the coming months is to find out the full extent of this drug's potential."

"If we can figure out a way to treat TB when it's in a latent stage, then we could save millions of lives throughout the world."

Provided by Research Australia

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