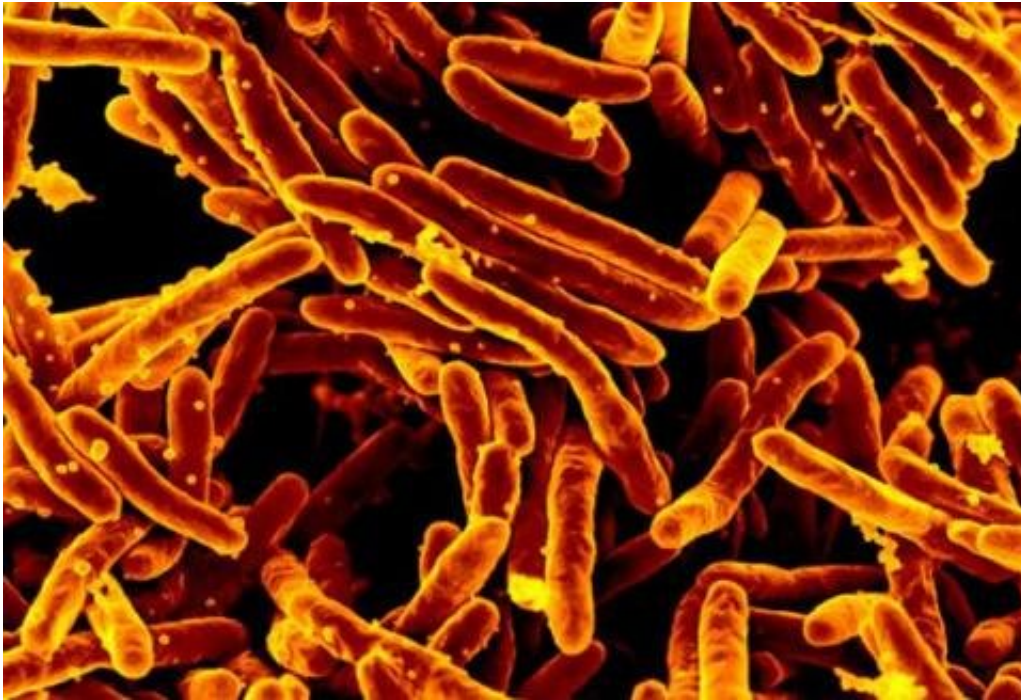


New drugs, test offer TB hope for millions

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Scanning electron micrograph of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria, which cause tuberculosis. Credit: NIAID

Thousands of scientists, activists and disease survivors Saturday wrap up a global conference on lung health dominated by the announcement of several breakthroughs in the battle against tuberculosis.

The following is a round-up of developments in how doctors and aid workers are tackling the world's deadliest infectious disease.

Miracle drug

Some strains of TB—a severe lung infection that can spread to the brain—are resistant to antibiotics and have been historically extremely difficult, and painful, to treat.

Several countries including South Africa, which has among the highest tuberculosis burden in the world, announced that a new drug had shown astonishing success against multidrug-resistant TB.

Bedaquiline, which in countries such as Belarus cured 80 percent of patients, was hailed by experts as a "game changer", and can replace months of excruciating and often ineffective injections for sufferers.

First vaccine in 100 years

In terms of prevention, major headway has been made on a new vaccine against TB, the first in almost a century.

GlaxoSmithKline showed in a trial in three African nations that its vaccine had a 54 percent effectiveness in subjects who already have TB but are yet to become sick with it.

"Such a level of efficacy could really provide an impact on global [health](#)," Marie-Ange Demoitie, who leads the vaccine development for GSK, told AFP.

New test for children

In a last minute announcement, scientists at the conference unveiled a revolutionary new way of screening children for tuberculosis.

They say the new technique, which involves analysing stool samples of infants, will prevent hundreds of thousands each year from contracting the disease.

The only current way of checking a child for TB involves a painful procedure and usually a stay overnight in hospital, rendering it out of reach for many in rural areas.

650 children with TB die every day, the vast majority of which never get treatment.

Targeted treatment

An innovative approach to getting to at-risk children showed remarkable success in four African countries.

The International Union for Tuberculosis and Lung Disease conducted a study on children under five living in a household with at least one adult diagnosed with the disease.

Those found not to have active TB—the bacteria is latent in around a quarter of humans—were given preventative treatment for three months, half the current course length.

Of the nearly 2000 [children](#) who enrolled, 92 percent of those treated completed the course successfully.

Lung health

The World Health Organization will host its first global summit on air pollution and health next week in Geneva.

Scientists at The Hague urged governments to view air pollution as a public health emergency—90 percent of the global population breaths polluted air.

"Six million people die every year because of [poor air quality](#)," said Neil Schluger, senior advisor for science at Vital Strategies, which is working a new global plan to tackle the problem.

"Yet too many governments are failing to address this problem as a public health crisis. Every day clinicians see the harms of [air pollution](#)—people suffering with acute asthma, heart attacks, strokes and more," said Schluger.

"We have to mobilise because the problem is growing and the need for action is urgent."

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