Public Comment Re: Federal activities necessary to address gaps in knowledge about how to safely and effectively treat tuberculosis infection and disease in pregnant and postpartum women.

Dear Ms. Kaeser,

As a community of advocates, researchers, and clinicians concerned by the paucity of data available to guide the safe and effective treatment of pregnant and postpartum women with tuberculosis (TB) infection and disease, we submit the following public comment for consideration by the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (the Task Force).

TB affects both mother and the existing pregnancy. It increases the likelihood of poor birth outcomes, including spontaneous abortion, suboptimal weight gain, preterm labor, transmission of congenital TB, neonatal and perinatal mortality, low birth weight, and postnatal TB. If left untreated, TB in pregnancy can result in maternal mortality rates up to 40 percent. Despite substantial clinical need for TB prevention and treatment, pregnant women remain neglected by research initiatives.

Researchers, regulatory authorities, and communities have reached consensus about the need to include pregnant women in TB research. Yet, systematic exclusion of pregnant women from research persists, even when the ratio of potential benefit to harm favors their inclusion. Despite their exclusion from research, pregnant women get TB and clinicians have to treat them. In the absence of evidence, clinicians are put in the difficult position of treating TB in pregnant women using regimens of both old and newer TB drugs without adequate guidance on dose adjustments, safety, or efficacy.

To improve the availability of information critically important to guiding the safe prevention and treatment of TB in pregnant and postpartum women, we appeal to the Task Force to investigate and recommend to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to:

1. Develop a registry to collect data on the incidence of adverse events among pregnant women treated for TB infection and disease and other indications. It can be modeled after the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry (APR) created in 1989 to address data issues among pregnant women with HIV and overseen by an Interagency Advisory Committee with members from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, and National Institutes of Health;

2. Work with regulatory authorities and legislators to craft regulatory policy or legislation as necessary to codify the assessment of new therapies in pregnant and postpartum women, which can be enforced by regulatory authorities; and

3. Establish a mandate for research networks and institutions that receive funding from the U.S. government to put in place a standing protocol to, where appropriate, allow for the enrollment of pregnant women in the studies they conduct.

Respectfully submitted,
Organizations:

ACREOD
ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership
AIDS-Free World
American Thoracic Society (ATS)
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Eurasian Key Population Health Network (EKHN)
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF)
European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
Genesis Educational Trust
Global Coalition of TB Activists (GCTA)
Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)
International Community of Women living with HIV Eastern Africa
International Health Consultancy, LLC
Jhpiego
JOPPA CENTRE
Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO)
Kigali Hope Association
Meera Foundation
National TB Controllers Association (NTCA)
New Jersey Association on Corrections
Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences
Positive Women's Network - USA
Red Ribbon Istanbul
RESULTS
RESULTS International Australia
Socios En Salud (SES)
TB Proof
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
World Foundation for Medical Research and Prevention

Individuals:

Abderramane Abdelrahim, Programme, Tuberculose National, Ndjamen, Chad
Adjei Simon, Ghana Health Service, Bawku, Ghana
Alena Skrahina, The Republican Research and Practical Centre for Pulmonology and TB, Minsk, Belarus
Aliaksandr Skrahin, Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk, Belarus
Amita Gupta, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, United States
Annette Gaudino, New York City, NY, United States
Arnaud Riat, Geneve, Switzerland
Atahualp Sanaia, ACREOD, London, United Kingdom
Bankole Peter Kuti, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife Nigeria, Ile-Ife, Osun, Nigeria
Barbara J Seaworth, University of Texas Health North East, San Antonio, TX, United States
Bavesh D. Kana, Johoannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa
Bonnie Richardson, Chicago, IL, United States
Brian Citro, University of Chicago Law School, Chicago, IL, United States
Brian McKenna, Contemporary Women’s Care, Northwell Health, St. James, NY, United States
Carrie Fritschy, We Are TB, Colorado Springs, CO, United States
Chloé dagress D'artagnan, Glen Ridge, NJ, United States
Christa Gallego, Escondido, CA, United States
Claire Dagress, Marina Del Rey, CA, United States
Colleen Daniels, New York City, NY, United States
Dalene von Delft, TB Proof, Cape Town, South Africa
Daniel Chiarilli, Columbia University, New York City, NY, United States
Dean Lewis, GCTA, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
Debashish Das, Kolkata, India
Deniz Uyank, Istanbul, Turkey
Diana Nilsen, Long Island City, NY, United States
Dorothy Namutamba, International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa, Kampala, Uganda
Dr. Arne von Delft, TB Proof and School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
Dr. C.S. Jamunanantha, Jaffna, Sri Lanka
Dr. Joyce Sauk, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Dr. Sarah Lespérance, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada
Dr. Vivian Cox, DR-TB STAT Task Force, Global Drug Resistant Tuberculosis Initiative, Chattanooga, TN, United States
E. Alice Christensen Majid, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Edward Lomotey, Accra, Ghana
Erica Lessem, New York City, NY, United States
Faustin Kitetele Ndolumingu, Kalembelumbe Pediatric Hospital, Kinshasa, Congo
Filiz Duyar, Ankara, Turkey
Giordono Uchofen, Arzobispado de Lima – Centro Medico Parroquial San Jose, Lima, Peru
Grace Montepiedra, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, MA, United States
Gugu Dhlom, Cape Town, South Africa
Helen Cox, Cape Town, South Africa
Ihsan Ullah, Bannu, Pakistan
Iveta Ozere, Riga Eastern Clinical University Hospital Centre for Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases, Upeslejas, p.o.Cekule, Riga region, Latvia
James Aquino, New York City, New York, United States
Jeffrey R. Starke, Houston, TX, United States
Jessica Hale, Jersey City, NJ, United States
Jill Sanders, Maseru, Lesotho
Jum’atil Fajar, RSUD dr. H. Soemarno Sosroatmodjo, Kuala Kapuas, Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia
Jyoti Mathad, Weill Cornell Medicine, NY, United States
Kate O’Brien, We Are TB, Rumson, NJ, United States
Kathryn Snow, Melbourne, Australia
Kelly Dooley, Baltimore, MD, United States
Kenyon Farrow, Baltimore, MD, United States
Keri Lijinsky, USAID, Washington D.C., United States
Khairunisa Suleiman, Nairobi, Kenya
Lafay Michelle, Paris, France
Laura A Peterson, Minneapolis, MN, United States
Lerato Legoebe, Johannesburg, South Africa
Lindsay McKenna, Brooklyn, NY, United States
Lisa V. Adams, Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine, Norwich, VT, United States
Lisa Marie Cranmer, Atlanta, GA, United States
Lisa Pannek, New York City, NY, United States
Lourdes Cruzado, GCTA, Lima, Peru
Marie Elizabeth Theunissen Famcru, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa
Marije Van Schalkwyk, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa
Maryam Bibi Rumaney, Stellenbosch University Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa
Mike Frick, Brooklyn, NY, United States
Mbumba Ngimbi Richard, Kinshasa, Congo
Michael Odey Odo, Lilongwe, Malawi
Navya Dasari, Philadelphia, PA, United States
Nimer Ortuno-Gutierrez, Damien Foundation, Brussels, Belgium
Nyamdulam Batjargal, National Center for Communicable Diseases, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Ogar Charles, Calabar, Nigeria
Patricia Vasseur, Ermont Val d’oise, France
Patricia Morgan, FHI360, Denver, CO, United States
Pete Dupree, Denver, CO, United States
Peter Gumboot, Bindura, Zimbabwe
Rachael Crockett, RESULTS UK, London, United Kingdom
Raj Vatsa, Stop TB Partnership, Geneva, Switzerland
Rashmi Sharma, New Delhi, Delhi, India
Raymond J Egolf, Palm Harbor, FL, United States
Richard Jefferys, New York City, NY, United States
Rinn Song, Boston, MA, United States
Roberto Luiz Targa Ferreira, Grupo Hospitalar CONCEIÇÃO, Porto Alegre, Brazil
Sandra M. Palleja, Bridgewater, NJ, United States
Sarang Thaker, University of Illinois – School of Medicine, Chicago, IL, United States
Sharon Wilson, New York City, NY, United States
Shilpa N. Naik, BJ Government Medical College, Pune, Maharashtra. India
Shivani Thaker, Chicago, IL, United States
Stacie C. Stender, Cape Town, South Africa
Suraj Madoori, Arlington, VA, United States
Svetlana Doltu, Chisinau, Moldova
Tania Thomas, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, United States
Tariro Kutadzwa, DAPP, Harare, Zimbabwe
Taye Balcha, Armauer Hansen Research Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tim Horn, Asbury Park, NJ, United States
Timothy Sterling, M.D., Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, TN, United States
Tushar Nair, Global Coalition of TB Activists, New Delhi, Delhi, India
Wim Vandevelde, GNP+, Cape Town, South Africa
Yael Hirsch-Moverman, ICAP, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, New York City,
NY, United States
Zeaur Rahim, International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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