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Members of Licensing and Certification,

As you are aware, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published updated tuberculosis (TB) control guidelines for health care facilities in the document, *Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis in Healthcare Settings, 2005*. The California TB Controllers Association (CTCA) had concerns about a new recommendation in the document and initiated discussion about this concern at the Fall CTCA TB Controllers meeting in October 2006.

The CDC Guidelines recommend that health care settings conduct initial and ongoing (preferably annual) evaluations of the risk for transmission of TB and reducing the frequency of TB testing if a setting is classified as low risk. The guidelines recommend that health care workers (HCWs) in facilities classified as “low risk” have baseline TB skin testing or blood assay for *MTB* and no further testing for TB unless exposure occurs. A facility is classified as low risk if persons with TB disease are not expected to be encountered and therefore, exposure to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB)* is unlikely or HCWs will never be exposed to persons with active TB or to clinical specimens that might contain *MTB*. After much discussion, CTCA requested an opinion from the Occupational Health Branch (OHB) of the California Department of Health Services on reducing the interval of TB testing in HCWs in “low risk” health care settings; the written opinion from the OHB on this issue may be obtained upon request. In summary, the OHB recommends annual TB screening of HCWs in California. Health care facilities that want to perform less frequent screening must perform institutional and community risk assessments and must obtain the approval of the local health officer. These facilities must perform TB screening of HCWs at least every two years. At the Fall 2007 CTCA TB Controllers meeting, a motion for vote was made on this issue and CTCA recommends the interval for serial TB testing of HCWs to be at least every 12 months.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie Low, MD
Past-President, California TB Controllers Association

cc: Deborah Gold, California Division of Occupational Health and Safety

Rupali Das, CDPH, California Department of Public Health

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