

**From:** Postmaster, Hines  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 27, 2016 04:52 PM  
**To:** VHAHIN All Employees  
**Subject:** Informational Notice

Dear Staff,

As a healthcare organization, we are here to keep our Veterans healthy and to treat and care for them when they are at their sickest. We do that with the knowledge, that as health care workers, we may be exposed to many different sources of infection in the course of treating our Veterans. However, we do have standard precautions that represent the minimum infection prevention that apply to all patient care: 1) hand hygiene, 2) use of personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns, facemasks), depending on the anticipated exposure, 3) respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, 4) safe injection practices, and 5) safe handling of potentially contaminated equipment or surfaces in the patient environment. As your Acting Hospital Director, the health and safety of all of our staff is a top priority.

In late December 2015, our Infection Control Program identified three separate individual Veterans who receive care at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, the LaSalle Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), and the Aurora CBOC, had been diagnosed with Pulmonary Tuberculosis (TB).

The Veteran in Aurora was diagnosed with pulmonary TB at a non-VA healthcare facility in July 2015. Hines was notified of his diagnosis during his general medicine visit at the Aurora CBOC on December 22, 2015. The Veteran in LaSalle was diagnosed with pulmonary TB at a non-VA healthcare facility in November 2015. A family member notified the LaSalle CBOC of the patient's diagnosis in December 2015. The Veteran receiving care at the main Hines VA Hospital campus was diagnosed on December 28, 2015 during his VA appointment.

Tuberculosis is transmitted through droplet aerosolization by an individual with active pulmonary disease. Transmission of TB is a recognized risk to patients and healthcare workers in healthcare settings. While we are confident that the exposure risk to patients and staff is low, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Hines VA Hospital are taking this issue seriously and are working to ensure high quality of care and the safety of our Veterans and employees.

Upon learning of these TB cases, we immediately engaged a multidisciplinary team of experts from Infectious Disease, Nursing, Infection Control, Employee Health, Occupational Safety, and Human Resources staff to track and manage the incident. We have been in communication with the respective County Health Departments, to obtain information regarding the community diagnosed patients, and to notify them of the individual diagnosed at Hines.

*Given the geographical distribution and timeframes of the patients' diagnoses, our Infectious Disease Specialist does not have reason to believe these infections are related.*

Staff that had close contact with these three Veterans are being identified and are being offered screening for infection. We are working to identify any additional Veterans who may have been exposed to the two patients in the waiting areas at the CBOCs during their multiple clinic visits. Based on clinical findings of the patient diagnosed at Hines, he was deemed as low-risk for potential exposure and transmission to other patients.

Transmission of TB is most likely to occur from patients who have unrecognized TB or have received ineffective treatment. TB is preventable and, in most cases, treatable. Our infection control program is designed to ensure prompt detection of infectious patients and employees, airborne precautions and treatment of people who have suspected or confirmed TB. Infection control practices can help reduce the risk of TB transmission. For reference, please find attached a fact sheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention related to TB.

It is our unwavering commitment that allows us to provide the best care to our Veterans and staff in a safe and compassionate healthcare environment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Infection Control at ext. 22543. Thank you for everything you do every day to care for and honor the men and women who are America's Veterans.

Sincerely,

Lynette Taylor  
Acting Hospital Director



CDC Tuberculosis Fact  
Sheet.pdf