

Newsletter



END TB IN BURMA: A CALL FOR ACTION AMIDST ADVERSITY

Burma, a Southeast Asian nation with a total population of over 50 million people, is listed by the World Health Organization as one of the thirty countries with the highest TB burden in the world. The country faces a triple burden of TB, including drug sensitive TB, TB/HIV, and drug-resistant TB. The fourth nationwide **TB prevalence survey** conducted

between 2017 and 2018 showed that Burma still had an estimated TB prevalence of 242 per 100,000 population, a significant reduction compared to 502 per 100,000 observed in the national TB survey conducted between 2009 and 2010, but still incredibly high.

Burma is composed of 17 states and regions and although the recent survey indicated that TB prevalence decreased more significantly in states than in regions, the overall TB prevalence remains high in every state and region (>100 cases per 100,000 population). While the survey highlighted the successes of the TB interventions in Burma between 2009 and 2017, it also emphasized the urgent need to intensify the main pillars of the End TB Strategy through a unified programmatic mechanism to meet the goal of the **End TB Strategy by 2035**.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, followed by the political instabilities in 2021 along with the ongoing conflicts have severely disrupted the implementation of nationwide TB interventions, contributing to the rise in preventable infectious diseases, including all forms of TB.

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This situation has been compounded by significant health disparities and the associated differences in accessibility to TB services. Accessing TB services is especially challenging for those living in the conflict zones, leading to low TB case notification rates which may result in the ongoing spread of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection.

Every person with TB deserves access to quality TB services regardless of the political situation. Despite the significant challenges that have been mentioned, delivery of TB services at the community level remains an ethical obligation in public health. A scholar once stated that **“conflict is a global health problem”**. Therefore, we call on national and global health leaders to maximize the support of the revitalization of TB services in Burma aligned with the 2025 World TB Day slogan **“Act now. Invest now. Deliver now. Together, yes we can end TB.”**

Acknowledgement: I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Kenneth Castro, Co-Director of TRAC at Emory University, and Dr. Lisa Sharling, Program Director of TRAC, for the opportunity to contribute this article. Their invaluable support, time, effort, expertise, and dedication have significantly contributed to its development.

About the author: Dr. Yamin Kyaw Thu is a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow at Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University. She is former Assistant Director, Subnational Tuberculosis and Leprosy Unit of Chin State Public Health Department in Hakha City, Burma (Myanmar). During her tenure, she led mobile active TB and leprosy case finding activities in over 100 hard-to-reach villages across Chin State, conducting chest x-ray screenings and sputum examinations for more than 7,000 persons suspected to have TB over a two-year period. She found it rewarding to address the challenges of planning mobile trips in Chin State's challenging mountainous terrain with poor infrastructure.



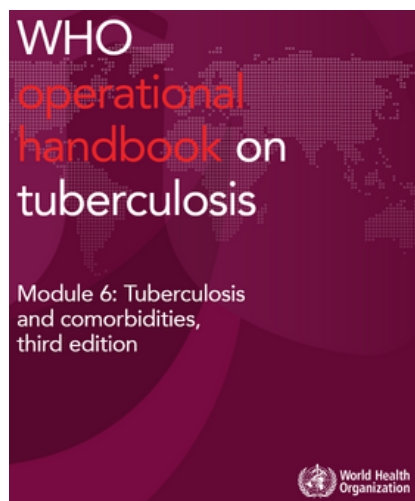
Keystone Tuberculosis: Heterogeneity from Experimental Models to Human Disease Conference

Terra Riddick, Stanzin Dawa, Ayana Paul, Louis Hopkins, Rachel Kinsella and Collin Lees-Thompson (not pictured) all attended the Keystone Tuberculosis: Heterogeneity from experimental models to human disease conference in Boston February 16-19.



All presented their research through poster presentations, and Stanzin and Rachel both gave late-breaking oral presentations titled '*M. Tuberculosis Regulates Early Lung Immunometabolism to Promote Tuberculosis Pathogenesis*' and '*ATG5 Suppresses Type I Interferon-Dependent Neutrophil Swarming and NET Release*' respectively.

WHO Launches updated Operational Handbook on Tuberculosis and Diabetes



The World Health Organization (WHO) released updated operational guidance on addressing TB and diabetes ([3rd Edition](#)) on February 6. The operational handbook aims to facilitate comprehensive and people-centered care. It contains practical guidance to facilitate the implementation of WHO recommendations, as well as information on screening, prevention, diagnosis, and co-management of both conditions. Implementation of the guidance is expected to increase access to diagnosis for people with TB and diabetes, improve disease management and care, and improve health outcomes. For

sections of the guidance **Matthew Magee, PhD, MPH**, Associate Professor at Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, reviewed evidence gathered and written by the authors of the handbook.

Ethiopian Collaborators meet with Emory School of Medicine Dean Dr. Sandra Wong

Emory SOM Global Health Residency Scholars Program Co-Directors **Drs. Russell Kempker, Henry Blumberg, and Jennifer Goedken**, along with Ethiopian collaborators **Drs. Andualem Deneke, Damen Hailemariam, and Milliard Derbew** met with Emory School



of Medicine Dean Sandra Wong to highlight and advocate for their long and productive Global Health Collaboration with Addis Ababa University (AAU) and the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. AAU is also a TRAC International Partner site.

TRACcolades



A huge congratulations to **Wassim Abdallah, MD, MSCR (c)**, on accepting the position of Assistant Professor with the Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases.

Kudos to **Cheryl Day, MD**, on serving on two [AIDS Clinical Trials Group \(ACTG\)](#) committees. Dr. Day is the Laboratory Center Representative at-Large for the ACTG Executive Committee, representing the [Emory School of Medicine Clinical Research Site](#) and also sits on the Tuberculosis Transformative Science Group.



Congrats to **Fay Willis, MPH**, on her recent promotion to Senior Data Analyst. Fay has worked with the Emory-Einstein TB Research Group for four years, supports multiple international clinical studies as a data analyst, and helps mentor several Study Coordinators and students.

Publication Highlights

Congratulations to **Hind Yahyaoui Azami, PhD**, and **Frederick D. Quinn, PhD**, at the University of Georgia on their publication titled [“Phylogenetic analysis of *Mycobacterium bovis* reveals animal and zoonotic tuberculosis spread between Morocco and European countries”](#). Their study explores the genetic diversity of Bovine TB in Morocco using whole genome sequencing. The study found close genetic links between Moroccan cattle and those in European countries, suggesting transmission can be facilitated through animal trade and human migration.





Kudos to **Peter Cegielski, MD**, on his recent publications, including the highly collaborative '[Characteristics of children and adolescents with multidrug-resistant and rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis and their association with treatment outcomes: a systematic review and individual participant data meta-analysis](#)' which included TRAC members **Sarita Shah, MD, MPH** and **James Brust, MD**.

Another study "[Macronutrient Status and Risk of Tuberculosis vs. Other Lower Respiratory Tract Infections](#)" was performed in collaboration with **Joanne Wu** and was initiated while she was a MPH student at the Rollins School of Public Health. The analysis explores the effect of nutritional status, a risk factor for TB, on the immune response and concluded that mainly adaptive cell-mediated immune responses are sensitive to macronutrient status while the acute granulocytic and innate humoral defenses against other lower respiratory tract infections are not. In collaboration with investigators at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Dr. Cegielski conducted the Systematic Literature Review titled "[Tuberculosis Incidence and Body Mass Index – An Updated Systematic Literature Review and Global Analysis](#)" which is published in The Lancet. The review found a consistent inverse association between TB incidence and BMI in the underweight to obese body mass index range. Finally, Dr. Cegielski recently presented "[Undernutrition and Risk of Tuberculosis: Updated Meta-Analysis](#)" at the [Annual Institute for Disease Modelling Symposium](#) October 1-2, 2024 at the Gates Foundation Conference Center, in Seattle.

Kudos to our TRAC Colleagues, including **Nestani Tukvadze, MD, PhD**, at the **National Center for Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (NCTLD)** in Tbilisi, Georgia, on their recent publication titled "[Programmatic Diagnostic Accuracy and Clinical Utility of Xpert MTB/XDR in Patients With Rifampicin-Resistant Tuberculosis in Georgia](#)". Their study investigates the accuracy and clinical utility of Xpert MTB/XDR in patients with rifampicin-resistant pulmonary tuberculosis during programmatic implementation in Georgia using phenotypic drug susceptibility testing (DST) as a reference standard. The study found that Xpert MTB/XDR has a high accuracy with significantly faster time to results than phenotypic DST.



Upcoming Events



TRAC

Tuberculosis Research Advancement Center
Emory/Georgia

WORLD TB DAY SYMPOSIUM & RECEPTION

MONDAY MARCH 24TH, 2-6PM

EMORY, RSPH, RRR BALL ROOM & ZOOM

Hear from TB advocates, visiting speakers & TRAC early-stage investigators, including...



Karen Reyna, Somos TB/We Are TB
Surviving TB



Erin McConnell, MPH, Treatment Acton Group
TB Advocacy



Hardy Kornfeld, MD, U Mass Chan Medical School
Unleashing CD8 T Cells Against TB



Mari Buziashvili, PhD, MPH, NCTLD, Georgia
A Dual AppRoach to Eliminating tuberculosis and hepatitis C (DARE TB/HCV) study



Rachel Kinsella, PhD, Emory
Dissecting how Type I Interferon Impacts Lesion Formation During Mycobacterium tuberculosis Infection



Ashutosh Pathak, PhD, UGA
Revisiting the Mouse Model: Host Sex in TB-Malaria Immunopathology



Ashish Sharma, PhD, Emory
TBD

TALKS FOLLOWED BY RECEPTION & HONORS RECOGNITION

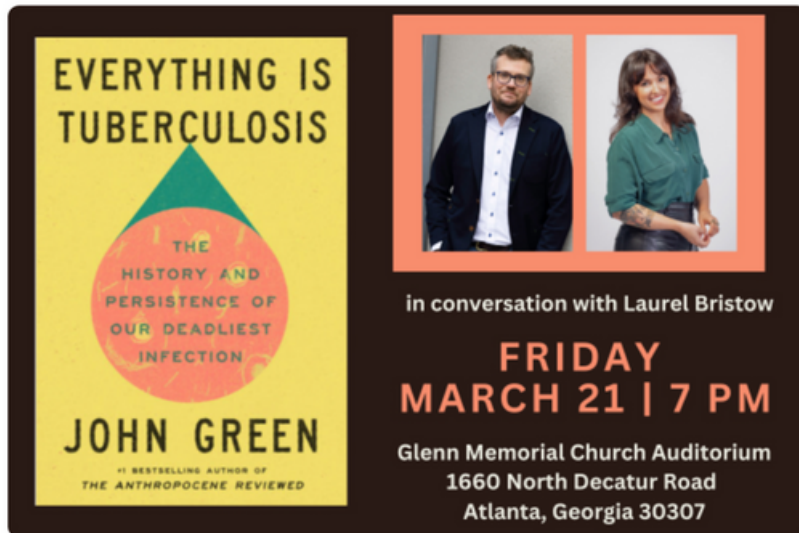
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JOHN GREEN IN CONVERSATION WITH LAUREL BRISTOW - EVERYTHING IS TUBERCULOSIS



John Green is a #1 internationally bestselling author. His upcoming book 'Everything is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection' was released on March 18th. John is a passionate advocate for global healthcare reform. His advocacy work includes TBfighters, a collective of TB and global health activists committed to fighting the structural causes of TB. John will be in conversation with

Laurel Bristow the host of the Emory Rollins/WABE weekly public health podcast, "Health Wanted". Buy the book through [A Cappella Books](#) or vendors listed [here](#).

[Livestream on the Vlogbrothers YouTube channel](#)



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
College of Public Health

GLOBAL HEALTH SPRING SEMINAR SERIES

INFORMING EVIDENCE-BASED GLOBAL TBPOLICY: INSIGHTS FROM MATHEMATICAL MODELING AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

Thursday March 27 2025, 4-5pm EST
**HYBRID EVENT: University of Georgia, Wright Hall
Room 120A, Athens, GA [Zoom](#)**

<https://zoom.us/j/97979788561?pwd=dShge4Tv1QrNLHT8Chgaa5jrkYnVb8.1#success>



Dr. Tess Ryckman Assistant Professor in the infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Her research includes the use of mathematical modeling, economic evaluation, and molecular epidemiology to inform infectious disease programs and policies and shed light on disease natural history and transmission. She is focused primarily on tuberculosis epidemiology and policy and has a particular interest in prevention and active case finding interventions.





**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**
College of Public Health

GLOBAL HEALTH SPRING SEMINAR SERIES



THE BIOLOGY AND ONTOGENY OF ALVEOLAR MACROPHAGES ACROSS THE AGE SPECTRUM

Monday April 14 2025, 11am EST

**HYBRID EVENT: University of Georgia, S175
Coverdell Center, 500 D.W. Brooks Dr., Athens, GA
Zoom (<https://zoom.us/j/96222421919>).**

Dr. Larry S. Schlesinger is the President and CEO of Texas Biomedical Research Institute in San Antonio, TX, where he has led a transformational growth and scientific innovation process since 2017. As a physician-scientist, his research focuses on lung immune responses in tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, developing new therapies for these conditions.




TB WORKS IN PROGRESS SEMINAR: IDENTIFYING TUBERCULOSIS BIOMARKERS AND HOST IMMUNE PROTECTIVE MECHANISMS AGAINST MYCOBACTERIUM TUBERCULOSIS ACROSS THE DISEASE SPECTRUM



**Friday April 18, 2025, 10-11 am
CNR Room 3001 and Zoom [[Flyer](#)]**

Dr. Padmini Salgame is a Professor at Rutgers University, Co-Director of the MD/PhD Program, and Associate Director of the Public Health Research Institute. Her research focuses on immunity to tuberculosis, the impact of Mycobacterium tuberculosis strain variation on transmission, and identifying biomarkers across the disease spectrum. She collaborates globally and serves as an editor for Infection and Immunity and PLOS Pathogens.

SYSTEMS BIOLOGY VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON OFFICE HOURS

  **4th Thursday of the month**
10am - 11am ET, RRR 205 & Zoom



Jeffrey Collins, MD, MS



Xin Hu, PhD



Boris Minassenko, MS



Khader Ghneim, MS



Ashish Sharma, PhD

Drop in to receive one-on-one support from Emory University informaticists with 'omics' study design and data analysis for tuberculosis research - including bulk and single cell transcriptomics, metabolomics and lipidomics. For more information please contact: jeffrey.michael.collins@emory.edu



MARCH

APRIL

EARLY-STAGE INVESTIGATOR PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



Thursday April 24, 2025 12-1:30 EST
RSPH, R. Randall Rollins (RRR) BLDG



REGISTER NOW

Meet fellow early-stage TB investigators, including PhD students, post docs and fellows to network, create community and learn about the value of peer mentoring and discuss future opportunities to be offered through the Emory/Georgia TRAC. The session will be led by Dr. Dawn Comeau, TRAC's Director of Mentor Training and Professor at Rollins School of Public Health. Open to TRAC-affiliated PhD students, postdocs and fellows working on TB research. **In-person only. See flyer [here](#).**

GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP FOR THE NIH R21 EXPLORATORY/DEVELOPMENTAL GRANTS

Wednesday May 14, 2025 8-10am EST



In-person & via Zoom

[Register here!](#)



Janet Gross, PhD, will lead a 2-hour workshop to review NIH R21 NIH Exploratory/Developmental Research Project Grant Funding Opportunities - R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed ([PA-25-304](#)) and Clinical Trial Required ([PA-25-306](#)). The focus will be on understanding the funding opportunity, and planning your grant proposal and research strategy. If you are interested in putting together a TB research proposal this workshop is geared to helping you prepare for a competitive application. TRAC Pilot Grant Awardees are encouraged to attend. **See flyer [here](#).**

Bulletin Board

EMORY
ROLLINS
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC
HEALTH

17TH ANNUAL SISIMID
JULY 7 - 30, 2025
EMORY UNIVERSITY
ATLANTA, GA

Summer Institute in
Statistics and Modeling
in Infectious Diseases

ONLINE - JULY 7-11, 2025
IN-PERSON - JULY 14-30, 2025

SISIMID is designed to introduce infectious disease researchers to modern methods of statistical analysis and mathematical modeling. Since its founding in 2009 by Dr. Betz Halloran of University of Washington, SISIMID has trained thousands of researchers from academia, government, and industry in cutting edge analytic methods. SISIMID's new home is at Emory University, and housed within the Rollins School of Public Health, under the direction of Dr. Natalie Dean and Dr. Ben Lopman. **Scholarships are available - more info [here](#).**

IDWeek 2025

IDWeek will be coming to Atlanta, October 19-22, 2025. The **abstract submission portal** is open with a due date of May 1, 2025.



To learn more and register, please click [here](#). **FREE VIRTUAL REGISTRATION discount code: GHS2025-COMPVIRTUAL**

February Publications

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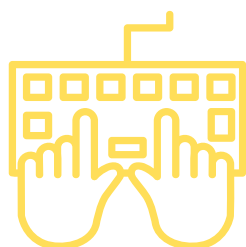
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**Have items to include in a
future newsletter?**

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