



Breast Cancer in Poor Countries

New guidelines seek to improve the early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of breast cancer in low-income and middle-income countries (LMCs) (Anderson BO et al. *Lancet Oncol.* 2011; 12[4]:387-398).

Late-stage disease presentation contributes to lower breast cancer survival rates in LMCs compared with high-income countries. Additionally, health care professionals in developing countries may lack sufficient training in cancer diagnosis, medical treatment, or surgical techniques for removing breast tumors.

The guidelines are based on consensus findings of the fourth Breast Health Global Initiative 2010 summit, at which more than 150 experts from 43 countries considered obstacles to breast cancer control in resource-poor countries. Recommendations include setting up cancer registries to collect data, investing in training programs for medical personnel, integrating diagnostic services and therapeutic and palliative care, and promoting public awareness that breast cancer outcomes are improved through early detection.

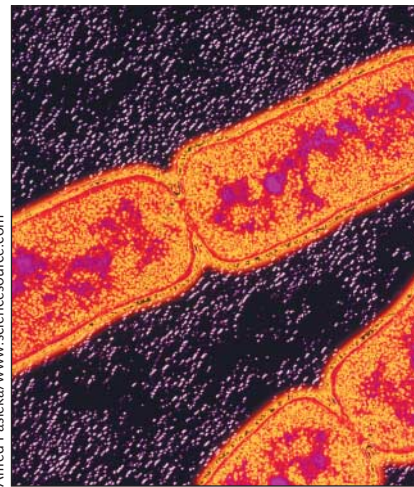
Active vs Latent TB

An experimental diagnostic test to determine whether a person has an active or latent tuberculosis (TB) infection shows promise, according to preliminary findings by investigators from the Catholic University of Rome and other centers there (Delogu G et al. *PLoS One.* 2011;6[3]:e18315).

This new test builds on a recently developed blood test for TB called interferon γ release assay (IGRA) that detects the release of IFN- γ in response to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*-specific antigens. Because IGRA is unable to distinguish between latent and active TB infection, researchers added a blood test that detects a protein from

the bacillus, heparin-binding hemagglutinin (HBHA). The response to HBHA is lower in active TB than in latent TB.

While performing this test on 87 individuals with different stages of TB, the researchers used a diagnostic



A new diagnostic test to help determine whether an infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is active or latent is under study.

algorithm consisting of a response to HBHA in combination with the IGRA and showed that a higher response to HBHA is associated with latent TB infection. Further studies are needed to improve the accuracy of the technique.

Choosing Diabetes Drugs

Not all drugs used to treat type 2 diabetes are equal in terms of long-term survival, according to a new observational study (Schramm TK et al. *Eur Heart J.* doi:10.1093/eurheartj/ehr077 [published ahead of print April 6, 2011]).

The study included all Danish residents older than 20 years who had begun taking either single-agent insulin secretagogues (ISs) or metformin between 1997 and 2006—a total of 107 806 people—who were observed for up to 9 years. Compared with met-

formin treatment, monotherapy with most ISs was associated with a greater risk of death from any cause as well as a greater risk of myocardial infarction, stroke, or death from cardiovascular disease. The ISs gliclazide and repaglinide seem to be associated with a lower risk than the other ISs.

The results suggest that metformin should be the drug of choice for type 2 diabetes in most patients. Randomized studies are needed to further clarify the picture in patients at low and high cardiovascular risk.

Tracking Drug Quality

A new publicly available database that provides information on the quality of medicines that have been tested for their authenticity is now available to anyone with Internet access (<http://tinyurl.com/3exvzcs>). The Medicines Quality Database is intended to assist health authorities, manufacturers, and regulators in protecting the public from substandard and counterfeit drugs.

To date, more than 8700 records of tested samples collected from Ghana, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Guyana, Columbia, and Peru have been entered into the database. Data include where and when the medical sample was found, the facility from which the sample was collected, information about the medicine, whether the sample was found to be substandard or counterfeit, and other information.

The database was launched by the Promoting the Quality of Medicines (PQM) Program in collaboration with stakeholders from countries in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. PQM is supported by the United States Agency for International Development and emphasizes verifying and improving the availability of quality medications for life-threatening diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis.—M. J. Friedrich