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Dear California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board,

MAY 04 2021

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
STANDARDS BOARD

I am writing to petition the board for the amendment or repeal of the Title 8 regulation §5199 Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard in paragraph (h)(3)(A) requiring annual TB testing in healthcare workers:

"TB tests and other forms of TB assessment shall be provided at least annually, and more frequently if applicable public health guidelines or the local health officer recommends more frequent testing. Employees with a baseline positive TB test shall have an annual symptom screen."

In 2019, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention along with the National Tuberculosis Controllers Association published updated guidance (1) on tuberculosis screening, testing, and treatment for healthcare personnel that included a recommendation that US healthcare personnel without latent tuberculosis infection should NOT undergo serial TB screening or testing at any interval after baseline in the absence of known exposure. The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine published a companion document (2) stating their full support for this recommendation.

Previously, annual TB testing was implemented thinking it would help prevent the spread of tuberculosis. However, research has since shown that annual TB testing does not help prevent the spread of tuberculosis, prompting the change in guidance noted previously. Additionally, the majority of positive TB tests found on annual testing have been shown to be false positives (3), leading to further stress and anxiety, further unnecessary testing, and more wasted time and resources. Lastly, mandated annual testing is a direct violation of the important principle of informed consent.

In addition to removing this standard, I ask that the Board consider taking proactive measures to not allow employers from continuing to mandate annual TB testing. Even if the Board removes the standard that obligates

employers to test annually, many employers will likely continue to mandate testing anyway. Given that annual testing has no known benefit, the risk inherent with testing, however small, is unjustifiable and continues to violate the principle of informed consent.

Please help protect the safety of our honorable healthcare workers and bring California back in line with science.

Thank you for your consideration,



Kevin Schwanz RD

4/21/2021

References:

1. Sosa LE, Njie GJ, Lobato MN, et al. Tuberculosis Screening, Testing, and Treatment of U.S. Health Care Personnel: Recommendations from the National Tuberculosis Controllers Association and CDC, 2019. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2019;68:439–443. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6819a3external>
2. Thanassi, Wendy MD, MA; Behrman, Amy J. MD; Reves, Randall MD; et al. Tuberculosis Screening, Testing, and Treatment of US Health Care Personnel, Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine: July 2020 - Volume 62 - Issue 7 - p e355-e369 doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000001904
3. Dorman SE, Belknap R, Graviss EA, et al. Tuberculosis Epidemiologic Studies Consortium. Interferon-g release assays and tuberculin skin testing for diagnosis of latent tuberculosis infection in healthcare workers in the United States. Am J Respir Crit Care Med 2014;189:77-87.