

Establishing a Protocol for Treatment of Latent Tuberculosis Infection in the Student-Run Free Clinic Setting

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Arbor Free Clinic (AFC) is a student-run clinic in Redwood City dedicated to serving the Bay Area. Every year, we identify numerous patients with latent tuberculosis infections (LTBI). However, no reliable referral resource for uninsured patients interested in LTBI treatment existed. To address this gap, we designed a protocol that offers treatment, monitoring, and follow-up.

Approach: With the guidance of the medical directors at AFC we designed, reviewed and implemented a protocol that offered LTBI treatment. Under this protocol, patients diagnosed with LTBI by Quantiferon and a negative chest x-ray are engaged in a conversation involving treatment options. Treatment options include rifampin or isoniazid with monthly phone check-ins, as advised by our infectious disease colleagues. Monthly liver function monitoring is provided for patients at higher risk of hepatotoxicity on drug regimens.

Outcomes: Between 12/1/2022 and 3/11/2023, three patients were diagnosed with LTBI, two of whom chose to pursue treatment. Patients answered 100% (3/3) of initial conversation phone calls, and 75% (3/4) of monthly check-in calls. The patient who decided to forgo therapy did so due to drug cost concerns.

Conclusions: Our findings point to the role that student-run clinics can have in meeting a gap in treatment for a population with increased risks for reactivation of LTBI. One identified barrier to care is the affordability of these medications, especially for uninsured patients. Further studies should be conducted to assess the viability of expanding access to LTBI care for uninsured patients at the county level.