

## XDR TB more common than bird flu

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South Africa has now detected 284 cases of extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB), according to the Medical Research Council. This is more than the 256 cases of bird flu reported around the world. There are up to 20 potential cases in Eastern Cape alone, where 14 patients have died of what is reported to be XDR TB. XDR TB is defined as a form of TB that is resistant to at least 3 of the 6 classes of drugs that can be used in second-line treatment.

A public health nightmare, all but one of the first 53 cases of XDR TB died within 3 weeks of diagnosis. Capreomycin, one of the few drugs thought to be effective against XDR TB, has been donated to South Africa by manufacturer Eli Lilly.

Cases of XDR TB are now being diagnosed throughout South Africa and could be going undetected in other parts of southern Africa.

Sources: various

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