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PROVIDENCE AMBULATORY  
HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION, INC.  
ALLEN BERRY HEALTH  
CARE CENTER  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

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## **I. SUMMARY**

In March 1993, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) received a health hazard evaluation request from the Providence Ambulatory Health Care Foundation in Providence, Rhode Island. The management request asked NIOSH to evaluate the ventilation systems serving the Providence Ambulatory Health Care Foundation Community Health Care Centers, especially in regard to the suitability of these systems for preventing tuberculosis (TB) transmission.

On June 16, 1993, NIOSH investigators conducted an environmental evaluation at the Allen Berry Health Care Center. A visual inspection of the ventilation systems, as well as a review of the original specifications of the air-handling units, was completed for the facility. Airflow measurements from supply and exhaust diffusers were made and compared to available design specifications. Smoke tubes were used to determine pressure relationships between examination rooms and corridors.

The investigation found that the heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) units were operated in an automatic mode which resulted in no supply air being delivered to the examination rooms and the laboratory when temperature setpoints were satisfied. A number of problems were observed with respect to the operation and maintenance of the HVAC systems. Two of the units had standing water and evidence of microbial growth in the condensate pans under the air-conditioning coils. Low-efficiency fiberglass particulate filters were poorly maintained. One of the thermostats that controlled the HVAC units was not working properly.

The clinic had established a tuberculin screening program for clients but had no program for employees. New patients are screened for tuberculosis using a tuberculin skin test on their first visit. If the test result is positive, the patient is referred to a central TB clinic for additional follow-up.

Deficiencies were observed in the ventilation systems of this facility which could potentially increase the risk of TB transmission in areas where TB patients may be present. These deficiencies could also contribute to other indoor environment problems such as allergies. Recommendations to correct these deficiencies are offered in Section IX of this report along with recommendations to strengthen the clinic's tuberculosis control program.

**KEYWORDS:** SIC 8011 (Offices and Clinics of Doctors of Medicine), tuberculosis, TB, ventilation.

## II. INTRODUCTION

In March 1993, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) received a health hazard evaluation request from the Providence Ambulatory Health Care Foundation in Providence, Rhode Island. The management request asked NIOSH to evaluate the suitability of the current ventilation systems for preventing tuberculosis (TB) transmission at the Allen Berry Health Care Center and four other health care centers. In response to this request, NIOSH investigators conducted an environmental evaluation of the Allen Berry facility on June 16, 1993. The results of the other four clinic evaluations will be issued in separate reports.

## III. BACKGROUND

The Allen Berry Health Care Clinic was built in the 1970's. The facility employs 29 full-time staff and up to 10 additional part-time physicians, dentists, and laboratory workers. The building is built of concrete block with a single-ply tarred rubber roof and is attached to a homeless shelter and a day care center. According to maintenance staff, there are no openings between the clinic and the adjacent homeless shelter and day care center. The floors are carpeted and the building has a suspended ceiling. The windows cannot be opened. The clinic has enclosed offices around the perimeter and in the center. Figure 1 is a sketch of the clinic (not to scale).

The clinic is served by three single-zone, heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) package units located on the roof. HVAC-1 and HVAC-2 were installed in 1988 and HVAC-3 was installed in 1992. HVAC-1 serves half of the perimeter offices including medical records, the conference room, and the pediatric waiting area; HVAC-2 serves the central area including the examination rooms; and HVAC-3 serves the other perimeter areas including the dental waiting area and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Each HVAC unit is controlled by its own thermostat. At the time of the site visit, when the interior temperature reached the thermostat setting, the unit turned off. When the HVAC fan is operating, a fixed amount of outside air enters each of these units (approximately 10% of the total maximum supply air flow) through dampers on the side of each HVAC unit. In each air handler, outside air mixes with the return air and passes through a bank of fiberglass panel filters. The fiberglass filters have a rated efficiency of 25%. Filtered, mixed air passes through the refrigerant cooling coils, the fan, supply air ductwork, and is delivered to the occupied space through ceiling diffusers. Air from the occupied areas enters a common return plenum above the dropped ceiling through ceiling diffusers and is returned to the air handlers. Air is exhausted from the building through exhaust fans for the conference room, restrooms, waiting areas, and laboratory. The exhaust fans for the conference room and laboratory are controlled manually. The other exhaust fans operate when the air handling units are activated. Natural gas is used as fuel to heat the supply air in the winter months.

Since the clinics serve foreign-born populations who are considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to have a high prevalence of TB<sup>1</sup>, all new patients are screened for tuberculosis using a tuberculin skin test on their first visit. If the test result is positive, the patient is referred to the Provident TB clinic for additional follow-up and treatment. Diagnostic and treatment procedures, which may induce coughing such as bronchoscopy, sputum induction, and aerosol treatment, are not done at this facility. According to management, the Provident TB clinic would like to institute a policy to refer patients with latent TB infection back to the community health centers for appropriate preventive drug therapy instead of providing the therapy at the main clinic. Individuals with latent TB infection usually have a positive skin test, have no symptoms, and are non-infectious. Providing drug therapy at the local clinic would hopefully result in better compliance and completion of the drug therapy. According to management, if patients come to the clinic and

are coughing and show other symptoms which suggest active TB, they are placed in the laboratory instead of the general waiting area until seen by a health care provider.

To protect employees from exposure to persons suspected of having active TB, the health center is in the process of setting up a respiratory protection program with assistance from outside consultants. Surgical masks are currently used for respiratory protection. There was no employee tuberculin screening program in place at the time of the site visit.

#### IV. TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. *M. tuberculosis* is carried in airborne particles, known as droplet nuclei, that can be generated when persons with pulmonary or laryngeal tuberculosis sneeze, cough, or speak. The droplet nuclei are so small (1-5 microns) that normal air currents keep them airborne and can spread them throughout a room or building. Infection occurs when a person inhales aerosolized\* *M. tuberculosis* and bacilli become established in the alveoli of the lungs and spread throughout the body.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, there were 26,673 reported tuberculosis cases (rate of 10.5 cases per 100,000 people) in the United States, an increase of 1.5% over the previous year. In 1992, Rhode Island reported 54 tuberculosis cases (rate of 5.4 cases per 100,000 people).<sup>2</sup>

The most common site of tuberculosis infection is the lung, where the organisms come to rest after being inhaled. In a small proportion of newly infected persons (usually <1%), the initial infection develops into active tuberculosis disease. The predominant symptom associated with tuberculosis disease is a chronic cough, usually with the production of sputum; fever, weight loss, and fatigue are also common. In the United States, 90 to 95% of those infected with *M. tuberculosis*, who are otherwise healthy, may never develop active disease because their immune system limits the infection; symptoms don't develop and a chest x-ray may only show a small area of calcification in the lung or in a nearby lymph node. For the remaining five to 10% of those infected with tuberculosis, illness develops after an interval of months, years, or decades, when the bacteria begin to replicate and produce disease.<sup>1</sup>

Populations in the United States known to have a high incidence of tuberculosis include blacks; persons born in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America; American Indians; Alaskan Natives; current or past prison inmates; alcoholics; intravenous (IV) drug users; the elderly; and immunocompromised individuals such as those with HIV infection. The risk of progression to active disease is markedly increased and infection outside the lungs is more common for persons with HIV infection.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Tuberculosis transmission is recognized as an occupational health risk for health-care workers. The magnitude of the risk varies by type of health-care setting, patient population served, job category, and the area of the facility in which a person works. The risk may be higher for personnel routinely in close contact with infectious patients, in areas where patients with tuberculosis are provided care before diagnosis, such as clinic waiting areas and emergency rooms, or during diagnostic or treatment procedures that cause the aerosolization of *M. tuberculosis*. These procedures include bronchoscopy, endotracheal intubation and suctioning with mechanical ventilation, open abscess irrigation, and autopsy. Sputum induction and aerosol treatments that induce cough may also increase the potential for tuberculosis transmission.<sup>1</sup>

Because infection requires the inhalation of aerosolized *M. tuberculosis*, the probability that a person will become infected depends upon the concentration of infectious droplet nuclei in the

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\* "Aerosolized" refers to the dispersion of aerosols. The aerosols of interest in this report are droplet nuclei that may contain *M. tuberculosis*.

air. Environmental factors that enhance transmission include: the sharing of a relatively small, enclosed space by uninfected persons and an infectious person who is coughing; inadequate ventilation that results in insufficient dilution or removal of infectious droplet nuclei; and recirculation of air containing infectious droplet nuclei.<sup>1</sup>

## V. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

The control of tuberculosis requires a hierarchy of different measures. Administrative measures should be used as the first approach to reduce the risk of exposure to persons with infectious tuberculosis. These include the early identification and treatment of infected patients, and the use of effective work practices. Engineering and environmental controls can be used to prevent the spread and reduce the concentration of infectious droplet nuclei. These controls include the use of local exhaust ventilation to control droplet nuclei at their source, general ventilation to dilute and remove contaminated air, air flow direction to prevent the contamination of adjacent areas, and air cleaning mechanisms (filtration or ultraviolet germicidal irradiation [UVGI]). Personal protective equipment should be used as a final control in high-risk areas such as treatment rooms where cough-inducing procedures are performed and TB isolation rooms. These control measures are explained in further detail below.

### A. *Early Identification and Screening*

To minimize the transmission of *M. tuberculosis*, early identification and treatment of infected persons, both with and without active disease, is necessary. The identification of individuals with tuberculous infection is commonly accomplished using the tuberculin skin test. For the tuberculin skin test, a small amount of purified protein from *M. tuberculosis* is injected into the upper layers of the skin. If the test subject has previously been infected with *M. tuberculosis*, his or her immune system usually reacts against this protein; the reaction causes a reddish swelling at the site of the injection (a positive result). If the subject has not been infected previously, there will be little or no reaction (a negative result). There are standardized guidelines for interpreting the test.<sup>6</sup> The injection does not contain live *M. tuberculosis* bacteria and cannot cause infection; furthermore, repeated skin testing will not cause a positive test in a person who has not been infected with tuberculosis.

Interpreting skin tests for tuberculous infection can be complicated by the fact that, over a period of years, some infected people test negative because they have lost their sensitivity to the test. The test however, "reminds" the person's immune system to react (if the person is in a periodic screening program), which will cause positive results from a subsequent test. It might then be incorrectly believed that the person had been infected in the time between the two tests. To avoid this problem, a "two-step" test procedure is recommended by CDC for the first skin test administered to a person being enrolled in a tuberculosis surveillance system. If the first test is negative, a second skin test is given a week later. If the second test is also negative, the person is considered to be free of tuberculous infection and can then be enrolled in the periodic screening program. (They need only receive a single skin test at each subsequent periodic screening.)<sup>3</sup>

Routine screening of health care workers at least annually is recommended by CDC; workers who routinely perform procedures with a high risk of exposure to *M. tuberculosis* (e.g., bronchoscopy, sputum induction, or aerosol treatments given to patients who may have tuberculosis) should be retested at least every six months.<sup>1</sup> If a person with a previously negative skin test converts to positive, the test should be followed by a chest x-ray to determine whether active tuberculosis disease has developed. The x-ray of an infected person without active disease may show no abnormalities, or show little more than a small spot on the lung where the infection has

occurred, possibly with deposits in a nearby lymph node.<sup>7</sup> A series of prophylactic (preventive) drug therapies are generally prescribed upon diagnosis to prevent the infection from advancing to tuberculosis disease. The two drugs most commonly used for this purpose are isoniazid (INH) and rifampin.

In addition to identifying individuals for whom prophylactic treatment is appropriate, routine screening can also serve as a surveillance tool to identify areas or occupations for which there may be an increased risk of tuberculosis transmission. It should be noted that even if the drug treatment successfully kills the tuberculosis bacteria and prevents the development of active disease, the patient will continue to test positive on later tuberculosis skin testing because his or her immune system will "remember" the TB protein and react to the skin test.

When a patient develops active pulmonary tuberculosis, the infection in the lung destroys lung tissue as it grows, thus forming a cavity. When the cavity erodes into an airway, infectious material (which includes live *M. tuberculosis*) in the airway causes the patient to cough, which can aerosolize *M. tuberculosis*. A diagnosis of tuberculosis should be considered for any patient with persistent cough or other symptoms compatible with tuberculosis, such as weight loss, anorexia, or fever. Because diagnosis of tuberculosis disease is generally based on recognizing symptoms, there is a time period before diagnosis that the patient is infectious but has not been isolated. For this reason, early diagnosis of tuberculosis is critical for minimizing transmission. Upon diagnosis, drug therapy should be promptly initiated and the patient isolated until the drug therapy has killed enough bacteria to leave the patient non-infectious.<sup>1</sup>

The selection of drugs for treating a patient (either to prevent the development of active tuberculosis after identification of infection, or to treat active tuberculosis disease) depends on a number of factors including the health status of the patient and the strain of *M. tuberculosis* causing the infection. Some strains of *M. tuberculosis* are resistant to the most commonly used drugs requiring the use of other pharmaceuticals; drug therapy should be selected appropriately.<sup>8</sup>

## B. *Engineering and Environmental Controls*

### 1. Ventilation

There are two general categories of ventilation which may be used to reduce *M. tuberculosis* exposures: local exhaust ventilation (LEV) and general ventilation. LEV is used to capture emissions near or at the source of generation before they contaminate the general room air. The use of scavenging booths or hoods for sputum induction is an example of LEV which can be used to control *M. tuberculosis* exposures.<sup>1</sup> General guidelines for LEV are provided in "Industrial Ventilation, a Manual of Recommended Practice."<sup>9</sup>

General ventilation reduces the concentration of contaminants through dilution and removal of contaminated air. There are two basic designs for general ventilation systems. The first, a "single pass" system exhausts all the room air to the outside. The second design recirculates most of the air, with a small portion being exhausted and replaced with outside air. The primary advantage of the single-pass design is that contaminated air is exhausted directly to the outside and not recirculated within the building; the principal disadvantage is the greater cost of heating or cooling the necessary additional outside air. Heat recovery systems can be used with recirculating systems.

Ventilation rates for health care facilities are expressed in terms of air changes per hour (ACH). An ACH is defined as the ratio of the ventilation rate (volume of air entering the room per hour) to the room volume. This terminology, however, can be misleading because the total volume of room air may not actually be "changed" the theoretical number of times per hour due to air flow patterns in the room. The units of ACH are used to provide a convenient way of relating the volume flow rate of air to the size of the room.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) have recommended at least six ACH for health care facility isolation and treatment rooms based on comfort and odor control.<sup>10,11</sup> However, there are no laboratory or clinical data that can validate any significant control of worker exposure to droplet nuclei containing *M. tuberculosis* bacteria at these recommended air flow rates. Hospital-ventilation studies published in the 1960's provide evidence to indicate that general ventilation rates substantially higher than six ACH in hospital rooms do improve dilution and removal of airborne bacteria.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

It is important to recognize that the available studies do not permit quantitative estimation of the risk of infection at any given level of general ventilation. Similarly, the available studies do not permit quantitative estimation of decreases in risk that would result from specific increases in general ventilation levels from six ACH to substantially higher values. However, the data indicate the need to have general ventilation rates at the highest possible levels to reduce exposure to droplet nuclei. Therefore, it is recommended that health-care settings be designed to achieve the best general ventilation air flows (striving for substantially greater than six ACH) in those areas where confirmed or potential tuberculosis patients are present (e.g., isolation and treatment rooms).

In addition to supplying the specified airflow, ventilation systems should also provide satisfactory directional airflow patterns both from area to area and within each room. Airflow should be from "clean" to "less clean" areas, such as from hallways to treatment rooms. This can be accomplished by creating negative pressure in the area into which flow is desired relative to adjacent areas by exhausting more air from the area than is being supplied, preferably directly exhausting the air to the outside. Rooms where *M. tuberculosis* is likely to be present, such as isolation and examination rooms, should be under negative pressure with respect to adjacent corridors. Pressure differentials are more easily maintained in closed rooms;<sup>12</sup> therefore, it is important that doors close tightly and are kept closed as much as possible.

## 2. High Efficiency Particle Air (HEPA) Filtration and Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation

The use of high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration and ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) have been proposed as measures to control *M. tuberculosis* transmission. UVGI can be used as a method of air cleaning that can be used in conjunction with other TB control measures. Two systems of UVGI can be used: duct irradiation and upper room air irradiation. Concerns that arise from the use of UV radiation for infection control include the potential health hazards from overexposure to UV radiation itself, which include keratoconjunctivitis (inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva) and erythema (reddening) of the skin, and proper maintenance of the UV lamps and fixtures. UVGI should not be used as a substitute for HEPA filters if it is necessary to recirculate air from TB isolation rooms, as a substitute for local exhaust ventilation to the outside, or as a substitute for negative pressure or general ventilation rates of at least six ACH.

HEPA filtration should be effective at reducing air concentrations of *M. tuberculosis*. Research has shown it to be effective at reducing air concentrations of *Aspergillus* spores which are of a similar size range to aerosolized *M. tuberculosis* particles.<sup>13,14,15</sup> HEPA filters can be used to clean air before it is recirculated into other parts of a facility or back into the same area, or exhausted to the outside. HEPA filtration systems require proper installation, periodic leak testing, and meticulous maintenance.

C. *Respiratory Protection*

In addition to engineering controls, NIOSH recommends that personal respiratory protection be used to reduce the risk of infection for health care workers. NIOSH considers this to be necessary because of the lack of available data to fully assess the efficacy and reliability of the engineering controls discussed above. Recommendations for respiratory protection for workers exposed to *M. tuberculosis* are provided in the NIOSH document: NIOSH Recommended Guidelines for Personal Respiratory Protection of Workers in Health Care Facilities Potentially Exposed to Tuberculosis.<sup>18</sup> In this document, NIOSH specifies the type of respirator that should be used for various locations and procedures. For areas or procedures which NIOSH considers to have a medium potential for exposure to aerosolized *M. tuberculosis*, such as isolation rooms, NIOSH recommends a half-face powered air-purifying respirator with a HEPA-filter as a minimum level of respiratory protection. For areas or procedures which NIOSH considers to have a high potential for exposure, such as sputum induction, NIOSH recommends that half-face positive-pressure air-line respirators be used as a minimum level of respiratory protection. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Region II office has recommended, at a minimum, the use of NIOSH-approved dust, fume, and mist air-purifying half-mask respirators for entering isolation rooms, when performing medical procedures such as bronchoscopy and sputum induction, and while transporting patients.<sup>19</sup>

If respirators are used, a complete respirator program must be implemented that meets the requirements of OSHA respiratory protection standard (29 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1910.134).<sup>20</sup> Guidelines for implementing a personal respiratory protection program are included in the NIOSH document referenced above.<sup>18</sup> The minimum requirements for a respiratory protection program include a written standard operating procedure for the selection and use of respirators; training and instructions on respirator usage; the cleaning, repair, and housing of respirators; the continued surveillance of work area conditions for worker exposure and stress, and for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the respirator program; and the medical evaluation of employees to determine that they are physically able to wear the respirator selected for use.

In addition to the use of respirators by health care professionals, the wearing of respirators by infectious patients may also reduce *M. tuberculosis* exposures; it is important that respirators used for this purpose do not have an exhalation valve.

## VI. METHODS

A walk-through tour of the clinic was conducted to visually inspect the ventilation systems, including the mechanical units, outside air dampers, filters, and examination room systems. The mechanical diagrams of the ventilation systems were reviewed. Smoke tubes were used to qualitatively determine the pressure relationship between the examination rooms and patient waiting areas.

When the ventilation systems were operational, airflow measurements were made using a Shortridge Instruments, Inc. Flowhood® Model CFM 88. Using this instrument, airflow through a supply diffuser or exhaust grille can be read directly in cubic feet per minute (cfm). The measured airflows were compared to the design specifications on the mechanical plans. Temperature and relative humidity measurements were made with a Vaisala HM34 Humidity and Temperature Meter.

## **VII. RESULTS**

Inspection of the HVAC air handling systems revealed general maintenance problems. HVAC Units 1 and 2 had standing water and some evidence of microbial growth (probably mold) in the condensate pans under the air-conditioning coils. A piece of convoluted plastic pipe had been added to each unit's drain pipe which caused water to stay in the drain pan. The filters for these two units were damp and falling apart, as well as completely covered with a thick coating of material (dust and mold). These conditions have been associated with allergens (including mold spores) being entrained into the air supplied to occupied areas. HVAC Unit 3 was in good condition with no standing water in the condensate pan and no evidence of contamination on the air-conditioning coils. There was some material built up on the filters.

The HVAC units were controlled by individual thermostats. When the thermostats were satisfied, the units turned off. As a result, there are times when no airflow is provided by the HVAC systems. Two of the thermostats had tamper-proof covers and were operating as designed. The thermostat for HVAC 3 was located in a patient waiting area and did not have a cover. It showed evidence of tampering and was located in an inappropriate location. This thermostat was located under a supply diffuser from HVAC unit 2, which resulted in it responding to that temperature instead of the offices it served. Temperature and relative humidity measurements throughout the clinic ranged from 71-76°F and 48-53%, respectively. Higher temperatures (73-76°F) were measured in the areas served by the HVAC 3 unit than in the other areas which was consistent with employee comments that it was warmer in those offices. It was observed that a small totally enclosed office (family resource counseling) had been built after the clinic opened and was not served by any of the three HVAC systems.

Ceiling tiles were missing in the obstetrics/gynecology nursing station and in the hallway outside the staff lounge which could interfere with the flow of air into the ceiling plenum from return grilles. The clinic used the laboratory as a waiting area for patients with potentially infectious conditions. This is not appropriate since the laboratory was serviced by the recirculating ventilation system.

Spot check ventilation measurements were made for supply diffusers on each HVAC unit. Since the units were cycling on and off throughout the site visit and the thermostats were locked, ACH rates could not be determined. The actual and design air flow measurements for the supply diffusers are presented in Table 1. The measured flow rates were similar to design specifications. There was an active supply diffuser serving an enclosed entry way which was not on the original design. Airflow patterns were variable, depending upon whether or not the air handlers were supplying air. Therefore, the room-to-corridor pressure relationships were also variable and no pattern could be determined. The exhaust fans in the conference room and laboratory were operated by switches in the rooms. The exhaust fans in the waiting areas were also operational and turned on when the HVAC units were activated. There were no design specifications available for the exhaust systems.

### VIII. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The use of appropriate administrative controls, engineering controls, and personal protective equipment will reduce the potential for tuberculosis transmission in health care settings. This investigation found some problems with the ventilation systems which could lead to indoor environmental problems and increase risk of exposure to airborne infectious agents, including TB. These problems included HVAC units that cycled on and off throughout the day leaving waiting areas and examination rooms without continuous general ventilation and a lack of routine maintenance for the HVAC units. The exhaust systems were operational. The clinic has a patient tuberculin skin testing program but there was none for employees. Correcting the ventilation deficiencies, as well as creating and enforcing certain administrative policies, will help minimize workers risk to TB, especially when providing drug treatment for patients with latent TB infections.

### IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to help the clinic correct some deficiencies in the ventilation systems and other areas which were identified during this site visit.

- 1) The HVAC systems should be balanced and set up to continuously supply a minimum amount of air flow at all times when the building is occupied to prevent a build-up of air contaminants. To reduce the potential for infectious disease transmission, air flow rates in the examination rooms should be designed to achieve the best ventilation airflow possible, striving for substantially greater than six ACH for each room.
- 2) To prevent standing water in the condensate pans, the extra plastic elbows on the drains for HVAC units 1 and 2 should be removed. A routine general maintenance program, including such items as checking and replacing filters, cleaning coils, and replacing belts when necessary, should be developed for the ventilation systems. If used, HEPA filters must be inspected and leak-tested on a regular basis.
- 3) Ventilation should be added to the family resource counseling office. The thermostat for the HVAC 3 unit should be repaired and covered with a tamper-proof cover. With the assistance of a ventilation engineer, it would also be beneficial to move the thermostat out of the waiting area and away from the supply diffuser from the HVAC 2 unit.
- 4) To improve air flow and prevent short-circuiting of supply air into the return ceiling plenum, missing ceiling tiles should be replaced.
- 5) The clinic should establish a formal employee tuberculin screening and follow-up program in accordance with current CDC guidelines.<sup>1</sup>
- 6) The laboratory, as currently ventilated, is not a suitable isolation area for TB patients. An isolation room should be created that has substantially greater than six ACH, under negative pressure with respect to the surrounding areas and exhausts all of the room air directly to the outside. As an interim measure to establish an isolation room for the clinic instead of using the laboratory, an additional exhaust fan to the roof for the designated isolation room should be installed to create negative air flow with respect to the hallway and patient waiting areas. The outside air intakes for the building should be taken into consideration during installation. The return grilles in this room should be sealed off to prevent air from returning to the main air handler or a HEPA filter should be installed as a precautionary measure to minimize possible re-entrainment of contaminants into the recirculating ventilation system.

- 7) The clinic should establish a policy for health-care workers regarding the use of respiratory protection against potential inhalation hazards when working with known or suspected TB infected patients. Respirators should meet the requirements specified by NIOSH in 30 CFR 11. Respiratory protective devices should be worn and a respiratory protection program which meets the OSHA requirements (29 CFR 1910.134) should be in place at the facility.<sup>20</sup> For exposure to aerosols containing TB organisms, NIOSH recommends that the respirator offering the highest level of protection should be selected that is consistent and feasible with the tasks to be performed by the workers. Surgical masks do not meet these guidelines and do not provide adequate protection to the wearer due to poor face fit characteristics and potential leakage of small particles through filter media.

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1. Providence Ambulatory Health Care Foundation
2. AFL-CIO Service Workers Union - Local 1199
3. R.I. Committee on Occupational Safety and Health
4. OSHA, Region I

**For the purpose of informing affected employees, copies of this report shall be posted by the employer in a prominent place accessible to the employees for a period of 30 calendar days.**

**TABLE 1**  
**Ventilation Measurements**  
**Allen Berry Health Care Center**  
**Providence, Rhode Island**  
**HETA 93-0845**  
**June 16, 1993**

Location of Diffuser	Field Measurement (cfm)*	Design Measurement (cfm)
HVAC1/Waiting Area	+769	+600
HVAC1/Entrance	+569	None
HVAC1/WAC	+405	+600
HVAC1/WAC	+414	+300
HVAC1/WAC	+455	+300
HVAC2/Dentist	+187	+200
HVAC2/Dentist	+130	+200
HVAC2/OB/GYN	+247	+200
HVAC2/Waiting Area	+612	+450
HVAC2/Waiting Area	+413	+450
HVAC3/Conference Rm	+221	+160
HVAC3/Conference Rm	+211	+160
HVAC3/Office	+121	+100

\* - cfm (cubic feet per minute)