



## **World Health Day and the Growing Danger of Anti-microbial Resistance**

OAKLAND, CA (April 7, 2011) – In recognition of World Health Day, the Public Health Institute (PHI) commends the World Health Organization’s call to combat antimicrobial resistance globally to ensure that effective medicines will be available for future generations. This year’s theme, “antimicrobial resistance: no action today, no cure tomorrow,” highlights the growing global threat from bacteria, fungi, viruses and parasites that have developed resistance to drug treatment.

PHI’s Puentes de Esperanza (Bridges of Hope) program is on the front lines of the crucial fight against antimicrobial resistance. The program is a binational effort to treat multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in Baja California, Mexico. Since 2006, the program has had a treatment success rate of more than 90 percent.

“PHI’s Puentes de Esperanza project is taking an effective, community-oriented approach to identifying and treating patients who are multi-drug resistant,” said Mary A. Pittman, DrPH, president and CEO of PHI. “I applaud the program’s success in battling this pernicious public health threat.”

Program coordinator Hector Perez, MD, is now leading a special effort to head off new MDR-TB cases among children. He and colleagues are diagnosing and treating kids with early TB infection who have been exposed to MDR-TB. The goal is to prevent the infection from developing into the MDR-form of the disease, which is more difficult and expensive to treat. “We are making a difference today one family at a time, and we hope this will translate to progress around the world in this area,” Perez said.

The bacterium that causes TB is present in about one third of the world’s population; up to 10 percent may eventually develop the disease. Complicating TB control is the emergence of strains that resist treatment by some or most of the medications available. An estimated 440,000 people worldwide have the drug-resistant form of the disease.

### **About the Public Health Institute**

[PHI](#), an independent nonprofit organization based in Oakland, California, is dedicated to promoting health, well-being and quality of life for people throughout California, across the nation and around the world. PHI’s primary methods for achieving these goals include: sharing evidence developed through quality research and evaluation; providing training and technical assistance; and promoting successful prevention strategies to policymakers, communities and individuals.

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