

WORLD TB DAY EVENT AT CLOETESVILLE CLINIC, STELLENBOSCH

– 24 March 2022

World TB Day is commemorated on March 24 to build the fight toward ending the global epidemic of TB. The WHO estimated that in 2020, there were 10 million people newly ill with tuberculosis around the world. Each day, this curable and preventable disease accounts for up to 4500 deaths worldwide, including 700 children. Free of TB (with members from the CLII and Antrum Biotech) dedicated time in Cloetesville clinic, Stellenbosch, to raise awareness about tuberculosis, encourage good health-seeking behaviours, and assist with health screening in the local community.

Dr Suzette Oelofse was the guest speaker at the event and highlighted that we have detected and treated fewer TB cases in 2020 than previous years for the first time in over a decade. Importantly, she added, these cases are not gone but merely missing in our communities. Approximately 1 in 3 TB cases are 'missed' or remain undiagnosed within the community – fuelling the TB epidemic. Dr Oelofse explained that by taking TB testing into the communities with active case finding strategies, like our XACT studies, we could work together to find the "missing millions".

The researchers, doctors, and scientists also emphasised the importance of health awareness and urged the community to think about TB in this COVID era. They encouraged the community to be proactive in recognising symptoms of TB, presenting for testing and adhering to treatment to support the fight to end TB. They demonstrated the XACT active case finding model – a low-cost panel van equipped with a portable GeneXpert for molecular TB testing, HIV testing, and a PIMA counter for point-of-care CD4 testing. The XACT teams also taught the community about the importance of TB research, dispelling myths and motivating participation to find the 'missing millions'.

If everyone - including communities, healthcare facilities and organisations, healthcare workers, and researchers - works together, we can be free of TB.















