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# 1. TONTON'S TB TESTING STORY

"Hi Lorrie, Tonton has been referred to the Tokarara TB Clinic for a TB test by the team at St. Therese, Hohola. I don't know where the TB Clinic at Tokarara is. Could you assist my boy and me?"

This was the txt from my big brother late last night. This morning I quickly replied "Yes. I will be at your place at 8.30 am today - Tuesday."

Then I let my boss and colleagues know why I would be late. Today, I am supporting what we call at B4H, a "case of concern".

We got to Tokarara TB Clinic at 10 and were greeted by Vincent and Kathy. They told us to leave Tonton's clinic book at the counter.

After about 30 minutes, Vincent, called us in. I told him about my nephew's history of asthma – which might be why he was coughing, but our bigger concern today was his swollen glands.

From my work at the B4H: TB & HIV project, I know that swollen glands are a common sign of TB in children. Vincent explained to Tonton carefully, "I will use a needle to remove fluid from your gland and test it in a special machine. This process is known as Fine Needle Aspiration or FNA".

He led my brother and Tonton to a surgery room, and asked Tonton to lie on the bed, saying, "Yu strongpla mangi, yu no sa fretim nidle" (You're a strong boy, you're not afraid of a needle). At the sight of the needle Tonton was scared. His Dad said, just think of the needle as a mozzie, you will hardly notice it. Tonton forced a smile.

A few minutes later, they were out, and Vincent advised us to give the FNA sample to the lab team, "they will do a GeneXpert test," he said.

After an hour, I called Rachel from the lab team. She said, "NO TB detected. That means Tonton does not have TB in his glands."

"Phew and wow! I knew our PHA TB clinic teams are awesome and busy, but the kind expertise we all enjoyed today was such a relief!

The good news is, Tonton has NO TB in the glands. His cough is mild and is being treated.

His asthma is being better managed. He will return to St Therese's TB clinic for follow up.

We will all watch out for fever, loss of weight or appetite.

I am sharing this story because TB is a very tricky disease to diagnose and with support and persistence we can make sure no child suffers unnecessarily, gets horribly sick or dies from TB.

I am so proud of Tonton, his mum and dad. When every family acts so swiftly to check for TB, we can end TB in Papua New Guinea very soon! Please ask for help if one of your colleagues or family members is sick or you are concerned about TB.

Thank you everyone. This is a true story. Lorrie

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## KEY POINTS

1. **People who are most vulnerable to TB:** children under 5 years; unvaccinated children, people living with HIV; people with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes; heart or kidney disease.
  2. **Identifying TB in children** Identifying tuberculosis (TB) in children can be challenging. Symptoms are not always clear: Children might show signs that seem like common cold or flu, making it hard to tell right away that it's TB.
    - Children might not say how they feel: children can't always explain their symptoms well, like where they hurt or how they feel
    - The tests used to check for TB in adults aren't as easy to use or might not work as well in children.
    - TB looks different in children: The way TB appears inside the body can be different in children compared to adults, which means health workers must look extra carefully to spot it.
    - Young kids are at higher risk: Babies and very young children are more likely to get sick from TB if they are exposed, and it can be more serious for them. Especially if not vaccinated with BCG
  3. **Support for early case finding is more difficult when children don't understand, and parents are frightened about costs of services or family members are not supportive.**
  4. **TB clinic services** – ask to see TB clinic staff if you are worried about TB or have family members with TB and your child is not well.
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## Q & A TONTON

1. **What procedure was used to test Tonton for TB?**

**Answer:** A Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) procedure was used to test Tonton for TB. This involved using a needle to remove fluid from his gland to test it in a special machine.

2. **What are common signs of TB in children, as mentioned in the story?**

**Answer:** Swollen glands are highlighted as a common sign of TB in children in the story. Others can include: coughing more than usual, weight loss, fever, and night sweats,

3. **What was the outcome of Tonton's TB test?**

**Answer:** The GeneXpert test performed on the FNA sample revealed that Tonton does not have TB in his glands, indicating a negative result for TB.

[https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/tb\\_profiles/?\\_inputs\\_&entity\\_type=%22country%22&iso2=%22PG%22&lan=%22EN%22](https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/tb_profiles/?_inputs_&entity_type=%22country%22&iso2=%22PG%22&lan=%22EN%22)

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## DASHBOARD FACTS DATA:

- Reports from 2022 identified 2400 people had drug resistant TB
- Estimated proportion of TB cases with MDR/RR-TB\*, 2022
- Previously treated cases 22% (5.7-48)
- 22% of previously treated cases had drug resistant TB
- 55% PTB or TB in the lungs
- TB in Children under age of 14. 24% of the national case load were children
- 40 % men (aged  $\geq 15$  years)
- TB preventive therapy (TPT) is available for children and household contacts
- Failure to complete treatment can result in relapse.
- TB treatment coverage (notified/estimated incidence), 2022 was 80%
- FREE TB services. TB patients facing catastrophic total costs, 2019 34%
- without treatment TB is often fatal. An estimate of 12% of TB case in 2022 died.