In South Carolina,
TB might be forgotten—but it’s not gone.

South Carolina has the tenth highest rate of tuberculosis (TB) in the United States, a disease that worldwide kills 1.6 million people every year. Within South Carolina, the Pee Dee area has one of the highest rates of TB cases within the state. See and hear firsthand how TB is affecting lives in South Carolina through the SC TB PhotoVoice Project, which focuses on the experiences of residents in the Pee Dee who are living with TB.

Why is TB still an issue in the United States and, more importantly, in South Carolina? It can be explained in part by a lack of awareness and education available to the populations at greatest risk. While medical advances have made it possible to prevent, treat, and eliminate tuberculosis, TB continues to take a heavy toll on African-Americans in South Carolina—representing more than half of the active cases of tuberculosis in the state.

In 2006, participants in the SC TB PhotoVoice project were asked to photograph the things, places, and people of importance to them in their daily lives. Thanks to their photographs and the structured discussions that followed about the challenges they faced in living with this disease, a unique perspective has been gained on an under-recognized and serious public health issue in South Carolina. The SC TB PhotoVoice project has contributed to a growing body of work about conflicts in health and illness and the undeniable need to address health disparities within our state. The pictures taken and the lessons learned in the TB PhotoVoice project provide not only an important glimpse into the present, but they hold the promise of strengthening future approaches to medical care and practice across a range of serious health conditions.

The SC TB PhotoVoice Project is a collaborative effort of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Arnold School of Public Health’s Amaya-Lacson TB Photovoice Project, and USC’s Institute for Families in Society. Funding for the project was provided by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The University of South Carolina is an equal opportunity institution.
TB is a serious public health problem that affects everyone in our community, and it is important that all of us understand the myths and realities of the disease.

Most people associate the disease with an infection in the lungs, but TB also can be found in other parts of the body, including the bones, joints, and central nervous system. More than one-third of the world's population has the bacterium that causes TB, but the disease can remain dormant for years. Symptoms include weight loss, decrease in appetite, night sweats, and prolonged fever. Anyone who has been exposed to a person with an active case of TB should be tested and anyone diagnosed with TB must take the full course of medication required to treat the disease.

Bottom line? TB can, but doesn't have to kill.

What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It blends a grassroots approach to photography and social action by providing cameras not to health specialists, policy makers, or professionals, but to people with the least access to those who make decisions affecting their lives—enabling them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for social action and change in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image and accompanying stories to furnish evidence and promote a participatory means of sharing expertise to create healthful public policy. For more information, please visit www.photovoice.com.

Want to learn more?
— about TB control in South Carolina, please visit www.scdhec.net/health/disease/tb/ or call 803-898-0558.
— about the Amaya-Lacson TB Photovoice Project, please visit www.tbphotovoice.org.
— about the SC TB PhotoVoice Project at the Institute for Families in Society, please visit www.ifs.sc.edu/Photovoice or call 803-777-9124.

Our thanks go to our partners...

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