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## Russia's TB Epidemic

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The World Health Organization (WHO) believes that as many as 2 million Russians could be infected with TB by 2010 if measures are not taken to combat the disease. According to WHO statistics, TB infection and death rates doubled in Russia between 1991 and 1997. More than 100,000

new cases were reported in the country last year, and the incidence is expected to increase again in 1999. Experts note that the rise in cases in Russia could have a significant effect on the rest of the world. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) also has announced that the threat of TB has not declined in North and South America during the 1990s. Over 250,000 TB cases were reported in 1997 in the Americas, with PAHO

estimating that the actual number is up to 400,000 cases and 50,000 TB-related deaths each year. Health officials note that directly observed short-course treatment can cure the disease, but they warn that some countries, including Russia, have not shown a commitment to the treatment program.

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