

TUBERCULOSIS NEWSLETTER



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January 2026

Celebrating the Retirement of Dr. Chris Spitters



Congratulations to Dr. Chris Spitters on his recent retirement! After joining the DOH TB Program in late 2022, he officially retired at the end of 2025. Since coming to Washington State in 1994, he has worked primarily as a TB clinician, filling numerous public health roles in Washington, including the State TB Medical Consultant, TB control officer and/or health officer for King, Snohomish, and Yakima Counties. He also served in similar roles of shorter tenure for Island, Chelan-Douglas, Pacific, Asotin, and Pierce Counties. Dr. Spitters has been board-certified in General

Preventive Medicine/Public Health since 1994 and is a Clinical Professor in the Division of Allergy & Infectious Diseases at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He is also an occasional lecturer and regular Warmline medical consultant for the Curry International Tuberculosis Center at the University of California San Francisco.

Dr. Spitters' professional and public health impact is truly significant. He is recognized nationally and locally as a dedicated and experienced TB clinician, bringing his unique experience to all situations in a thoughtful and balanced manner, and advocating for patients, providers, and public health. He is known for always striving for the best possible outcomes for patients and public health. Dr. Spitters has been a trusted mentor and colleague to many physicians, nurses, and public health professionals over the years and will be missed by all. Prior to departure, Dr. Spitters reflected on the questions below, providing insight into his TB work entry, to advice he'd been given, and to the hopes he has for the work that will continue.

1. How did you get called to this work? Why did you stay in TB?

When I first came from California to Washington State in 1994 to serve as the deputy health officer for the Snohomish Health District (SHD), part of the job was to take care of the TB patients and provide the medical and disease control oversight for SHD's TB Control Program. I have been directly involved with TB ever since, with it being close to 100% of my work much of the time.

2. What is the best piece of advice you have learned from another TB staff member?

I can't settle on just one and have to offer three. (i) From various TB and public health mentors and bosses over the years, "*If it doesn't help the person down-the-street (from the person or issue of concern), avoid getting directly involved*", (ii) From Ann Elarth, "*Make the patient feel like they are your sole concern when you are with them.*", and (iii) From Maggie Osborn, a veteran TB [Public Health Nurse] and my first TB mentor, who handed me an enlightening book with this title: *Kill as Few Patients as Possible*. That sounds dark, but I think it's worth reading by anyone who provides clinical care.

3. What best practice did you learn the hard way?

Stay on the main path and be patient. Taking short cuts or projecting myself to be more than I actually am has generally led to problems and regrets that went far beyond any time saved or benefit gained.

4. What gives you hope for the future in TB?

Advances in diagnostics and therapeutics over the last decade or so have really made the experience so much better for patients with TB and for the clinicians who care for them, myself included.

5. What are you hoping to do as soon as you retire?

I'll just try to enjoy the ride and have some fun along the way. For starters, my wife and I will head down to spend time with her family in Paraguay for the month of February.

We are so proud to have shared time working together with Dr. Spitters and are now proud to recognize his well-deserved and official retirement! Cheers to you, Dr. Spitters, as we send you off with the warmest of wishes.