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Tuberculosis: Illegal Immigrants and Deadly Spread

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Tuberculosis: Illegal Immigrants and Deadly Spread

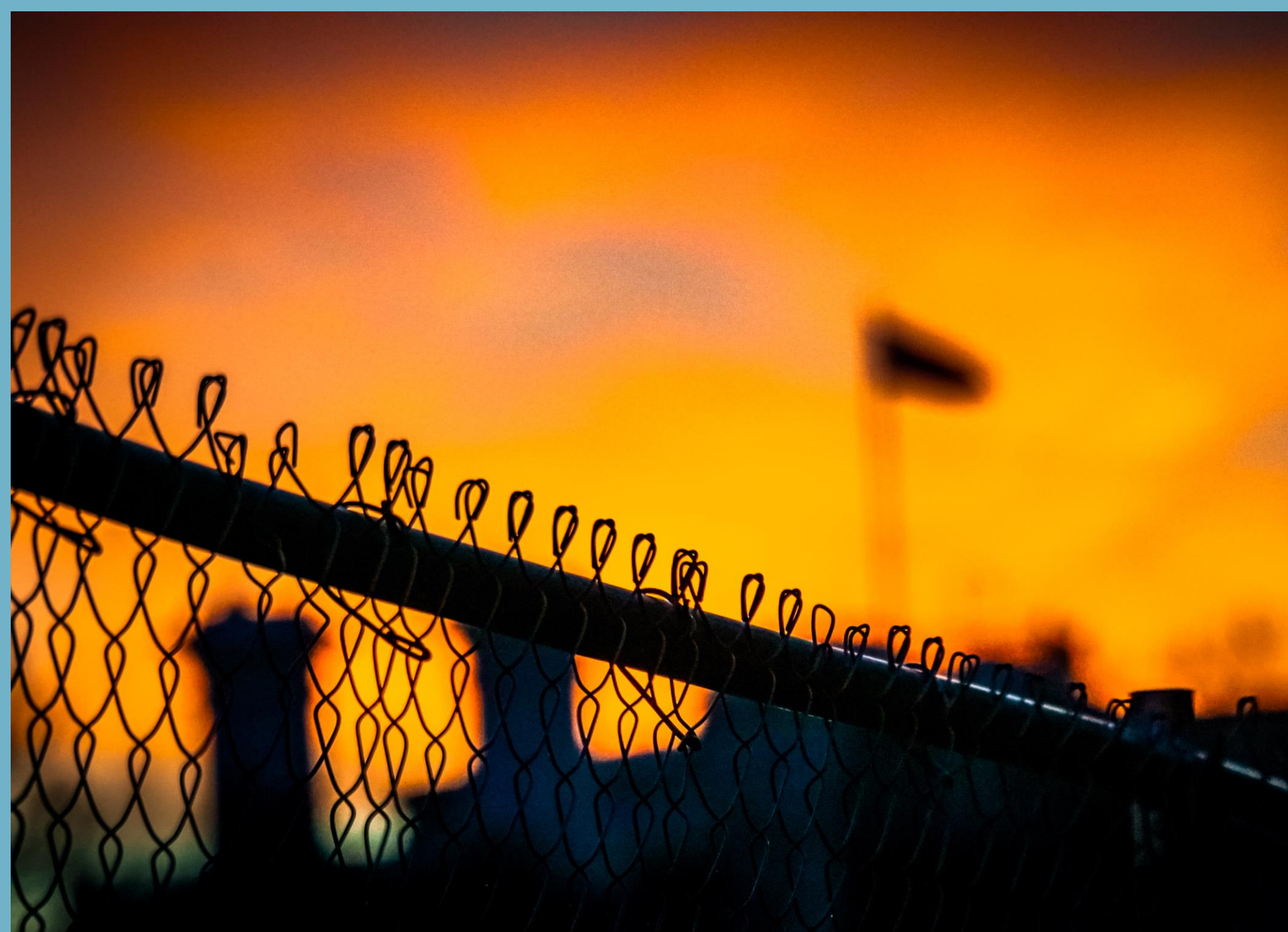
Abigail Foust - Faculty Mentor: Rob Wilson, Ph.D.

Introduction

- Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.
- Common symptoms include coughing, chest pain, fatigue, or hemoptysis.
- In its active form, tuberculosis is highly contagious.
- Untreated, tuberculosis usually leads to death.
- The majority of tuberculosis patients in the United States are immigrants.

Sources

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- Martin, Julia A. "Proposition 187, Tuberculosis, and the Immigration Epidemic," *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 7 (Summer 1996): 89-109.
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California's Proposition 187 increased immigrants' fears of getting deported.



Illegal immigrants working in fields can spread tuberculosis to others.

Research Findings

- Approximately 71.5% of the tuberculosis cases in 2020 were immigrants.
- Undocumented immigrants are not screened for TB before arriving.
- Immigrants avoid tuberculosis treatment because of cultural stigmas, language barrier, and difficulty identifying symptoms.
- Undocumented immigrants avoid getting tuberculosis treatment because they fear deportation.
- California legislators proposed the "Illegal Immigrant Statute," also known as Proposition 187, in 1994.
- Prop 187 denied healthcare to illegal immigrants and required doctors to report suspected illegal immigrants to the immigration authorities.
- Prop 187 did allow treatment for emergency cases, but waiting to treat TB until it progresses to the emergency stage allows it to spread to more people.
- Prop 187 passed into law on November 9, but a judge struck it down as unconstitutional in 1998.

Conclusions

- Several factors contribute to the likelihood that immigrants will spread tuberculosis.
- Fear of deportation is one of the largest issues.
- Anti-immigration laws such as California's Proposition 187 exacerbate the problem.
- Immigrants who fear deportation will be even less likely to seek treatment, and therefore will spread TB to those around them.
- While the anti-immigrant provisions of Prop 187 were nullified, the former law continues to have an impact.
- Anti-immigration laws like Prop 187 that deny healthcare treatment ultimately cause more problems in terms of tuberculosis spread than they solve.



Prop 187 removed both the motivation and resources for immigrants to get medical treatment for TB.