Reviewer's report

Title: Survival and health status of a cohort of tuberculosis patients in rural Lao PDR

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Reviewer: KM Kam

Reviewer's report:

General comments:
(1) Reviewing hospital based records is a well-known biased sample of more serious cases that may present late and thus require hospitalization; the authors should state this limitation clearly.

(2) Diagnosis is based only on clinical findings and AFB smear microscopy. Were chest X-rays routinely done? was there any external quality assessment (EQA) in place in Attapeu hospital laboratory?

Specific comments:
(3) Abstract, lines 18-19: what does "still symptomatic" mean? after treatment started, or after certain hospitalization period?

(4) Background: the first 3 lines are irrelevant and can be deleted. The first 10 lines in under Methods should be moved to Background.

(5) Background, line 10: "acid fast".

(6) Methods: the authors should concentrate on how the diagnosis of TB was made i.e. what clinical/ chest X-ray/ laboratory criteria (smear gradings vs positivity, length of stay/ treatment) rather than on how heoght and body weight were measured. If really want to be vigorous: were the measurement tapes calibrated with a standard? i.e it may be precise, but were the measurements accurate?

(7) How were other causes, e.g. COPD, of the same symptoms excluded?

(8) Discussion, line 7: why was paragonimiasis suddenly mentioned, with references 17, 18? There was no such component in the whole study. It might be relevant as a remote cause of hemoptysis in Laos, but the authors should justify this.

(9) Page 8 last 2 lines: why is latent TB mentioned? This does not seem to be part of this study at all.

(10) Page 9 line 22: should be "GDP"?

(11) Figure 2: it seemed that only about 30% had sputum examination at month 5. Since this is a critical period to assess treatment success/ failure, it is unacceptable to have such a low percentage, even more so if these were all hospitalized patients. Was there any specific reasons for this? The authors should explain.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.