Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 20 February 2010

Reviewer: Asma ElSony

Reviewer's report:

Reviewing the first page, paragraph 1

No comment

Reviewing the first page, paragraph 2

Revisit this area; state the goal/aim of the study.

Methods

We enrolled all TB patients who started DOTS treatment at Attapeu Provincial hospital from Jan 2002 until Dec 2004. Revisit English, change to

(All TB patients who started DOTS treatment at Attapeu Provincial Hospital were enrolled in this Study. A standardized questionnaire was conducted with the TB patients to....., also physical and anthropometric examination and evaluation of compliance through counting of treatment pills at home and at the health facilities were conducted)

Results

No comment

Conclusion

Page 1/ paragraph 4

Follow up of TB patient was feasible in remote area of Laos. It can improve patient follow up, and compliance, and assist with contact tracing, case detection
and accurate data collection.  
Revisit English.

Background Comment  
Page 3/ Paragraph 2  
Laos remains a HIV/AIDS low prevalence country with an estimated 0.08% HIV sero-prevalence in the adult population. It would be better to write it with in paragraph 1 /Page 3 after  
Mortality due to TB is estimated at 24 per 100,000 populations, including HIV- co infected patients.  

Page 4/ Paragraph 4  
Therefore, little information is available on the treatment outcome and risk factors for compliance......Laos enrolled in DOTS. Goal/aim was not stated, revisit this area.  
(The goal of this study was to assess the physical status, treatment outcome, and the risk factors of compliance of a cohort of TB patients in remote area in Laos).  

Methods Comment  
Study area No comment  
Study population and definition  
Revisit this area;  
(Start with the study was carried out from Feb to June 2005, enrolling all TB patients who started treatment at Attapeu Provincial from Jan 2002 until Dec 2004.(Start with the above mentioned statement as a study population then comes the definition; patients were enrolled if they had a positive AFB examination at Attapeu Hospital following the 3 sputum sample)  

Definition / page 5 /paragraph 1  
For sputum –ve patient’s diagnosis was based on a chest radiograph read by a trained radiologist ...algorithm.  
Needs to be revisited  
comment: (Diagnosis of sputum negative patients needs to be based on both chest x-ray and the medical officer ‘decision depending on the NTP diagnostic algorithm, not solely on chest x-ray.)  
Definition/ page 5 / paragraph 2  
We defined a TB patient as compliant if at any time during treatment .......if the patient finished at least 95% of his treatment days) Needs to be revisited and needs more elaboration.  
Lab and Field procedures Comment
Page 6 /paragraph 2.
In a sub-sample of 10 randomly selected villages, we screened all inhabitants for a chronic cough of more than 3 weeks....
Needs more elaboration. The sub sample statistical inclusion is not pointed out.

Data Management and analysis

Comment
No comment

Results comment
Page 8/paragraph 3
After multivariate analysis, the main factors of non compliance.........of symptomatic improvement. Revisit this statement.
(Needs to clarify symptomatic improvement).

Page 8 /Paragraph 4
In the sub study, sputum analysis from patients, close contact and people with chronic cough were in 10 villages. Among 180 persons reporting chronic cough, we detected 5 adults with..........were identified Confusing language/ needs to be revisited

Discussion Comment
Page 9/ paragraph 1 / line 3
Our study documents that home visits are an essential contribution........ Revisit the English

Page 10 /paragraph 2
Our patients were drawn out of the hospital records and might have been more serious cases. This may overestimated.........for DOTS regardless their physical status... Revisit the English.
(This may have overestimated the low health status of the sample.)

Conclusion

Comment
Page 11
We conclude that within DOTS of TB patient ........resources.
Needs to be cleared, revisit the conclusion.

- The study objectives/aims were not well stated.
- The study design not well stated. For Eg; Retrospective cohort (a survey among
contact of the registered TB patient in Attapeu Province to detect SS +ve TB).
- Total coverage of all TB patients registered in the district hospital. (Should be mentioned more clearly). (How are they included, the follow up to determine the objective the study.
- The group to compare the feasibility and the potential improvement in compliance and treatment outcome is not stated. (Risk ratio)
- The follow up means action/period so to get Incidence or change over time (survival rate or death curve among the group.); also not stated.
- Clinical outcomes (page 5); survival was the primary outcome (the study only describes the no of survivors), treatment failure (+ve ss from 3-5 months) was a secondary endpoint still not well stated in the results.

The article titled “Survival and health status of a cohort of tuberculosis patients in rural Lao PDR” may be accepted after essential minor revisions.

Level of interest: An article of importance though not novel
Quality of written English: Needs language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Done
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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:**

no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests'