Reviewer's report

Title: Inconvenience due to travelers' diarrhea: a prospective follow-up study

Version: 1 Date: 10 June 2011

Reviewer: Mark Riddle

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- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Authors should report the statistical package used to conduct all analyses and describe the statistical significance level (alpha) used.

2. It would be helpful to describe the differences in demographic features between the total population, the population meeting inclusion criteria and those completing informed consent. This is important to help the reader ascertain the generalizability of the sample to the overall travel population from which they were drawn. Any differences should be commented on in the results and in the discussion in terms of the implications that such differences might have on the applicability of the results.

3. For relative comparison it would be of interest to describe the health care utilization frequencies for travelers with non-travelers' diarrhea related illness. Comparing such measures of disease severity compared to other common travel related illnesses are helpful.

4. Recommend statistically evaluating TD illness characteristics that had an affect of the objective degree of inconvenience. (Table 3)

5. In design of the study, a unique question was asked to the subject before travel and after travel in regards to a hypothetical scenario of a travelers' diarrhea illness and the subject’s assessment of the impact of such illness. Interestingly, subjects who contracted TD during their travel stated the impact of future TD during travel would be lessor compared to those that did not experience TD during travel. Surprisingly this was also true for those who had to alter their plans or were forced to stay in doors. On the face of it, this calls into the validity of the question in its intended measurement. Particularly, among those who had to alter their plans or stay indoors due to illness, this would be. Perhaps it could be understood in the context of the individual having experienced such a disease, is less apprehensive. Sort of a parallel would be how nervous one might be when they first go to the dentist, but having been to the dentist, future trips, while as uncomfortable, would not seem so bad. While the authors attempted to evaluate perceptions of impact, such efforts should be secondary to those objective measures such as change in activities, having to seek care, or missing important
parts of their itinerary. Subjective assessments of inconvenience are just that, and can introduce problems when looking at them as primary outcomes. Would recommend that the authors explore more in depth the validity and value of such an assessment and how this fits into context of the objective data on impact. I believe the authors could offer further though and explanation for the findings beyond, “…TD is less of a nuisance than one might expect.”

6. The first statement in the discussion is that conventional definitions of TD include a spectrum of illness that is of a mild nature and does not warrant treatment or vaccination efforts. This statement is not well substantiated and is dismissive of a large body of research that has described both the individual health, economic and societal impact of such illnesses based on the current TD definitions used. The authors should spend more effort substantiating such an assertion or remove such a statement. It is particularly of concern

7. No mention of the potential impact of the sample population and generalizability to the results is discussed. This is a major limitation to this study given that 39% of travelers from this clinic were used to based the results and conclusions of this study. Generalizability is a significant concern and results need to be put in context of such with appropriate caveats.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. There are issues with spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout. Though relatively minor, they are distracting none-the-less and should be corrected. Too numerous to enumerate here.

2. Drop Table 4.

- Discretionary Revisions

None.

What next?
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- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest
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- An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
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- Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review
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- No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests
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I declare that I have no competing interests' below.

Open peer review
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Submission of this report is taken as confirmation that you are happy for your signed report to be posted on the BMC Infectious Diseases website as part of the pre-publication history of this article.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests' below.