Reviewer's report

Title: High background rates of positive tuberculosis-specific interferon-gamma release assays in a low prevalence region of UK: a surveillance study

Version: 1 Date: 14 August 2012

Reviewer: Anja Schablon

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Comments

1. The question posed by the authors is well defined and the methods are appropriate and well describe. But in the abstract the methods are missing and in the main manuscript the method section is at the end of the paper. Please add methods in the abstract and change the method section in the main manuscript after the background section.

2. The data are sound and the discussion and conclusions are balanced and adequately to the data.

3. The writing of the manuscript is acceptable

Major Compulsory Revisions

4. Limitations are missing in the manuscript. Please give a shorts statement about possible limitations of your study for example selection bias (e.g. hospital control groups).

5. Also you use different classifications in figure 2 (e.g. age groups) and the in the text. Please adapt this.

6. The description of the study population is not easy to follow. The different groups exposed and unexposed patients and members of staff should be described in more detail. In the manuscript you did not differed clearly between unexposed and exposed participants. Please define this in more detail.

7. In the results sections you write: …data were available from 465 staff and patients. Are these the unexposed group? In your flow chart there are only 445 unexposed staff and patient, please check this carefully.

8. In the next passage of the results you report a number of 34 positive IGRA results, please report also a proportion.

9. Also in the next passage you write “unexposed individuals”. Are these both staff and patients? Please describe this in more detail.

10. Please check Table 2 carefully. In the line “Country of birth” you report that
136 participants were TSpot negative but UK born are 126 and other are 9 (n=135).

11. The most interesting part of the paper is the description of the prevalence of positive IGRA in an unexposed population as those data are sparse so far.

Recommendation: Accept with compulsory Revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

There is no conflict of competing interest.