Reviewer's report

Title: Treatment Outcome of New Smear Positive Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients in Penang, Malaysia

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Reviewer: Kuaban Christopher

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COMMENTS ON REVISED VERSION OF MANUSCRIPT

Title of Manuscript: Treatment outcomes of new smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis patients in Penang, Malaysia

Even though the authors have made a substantial revision of their manuscript following my queries, there are still some fundamental issues which according to me should be addressed.

Minor essential comments:

Background: I do not think as the authors seem to portray that 200 billion infected people out of 1 billion who will be infected, will develop active disease between 2000 and 2020. The authors were asked to review their statistics but they have failed to do so.

Major compulsory revisions:

Methods:

1. It is still not very clear over what period each patient was followed up in this study. This of course is as I said earlier, related to the fact that we do not know what treatment regimen was used for the management of new smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis patients. Did the authors use the 6 or 8 months category 1 treatment regimen recommended by the WHO? Normally, the use of these regimens does not advocate for any prolongation of the duration of treatment. So it is not still understood what the authors mean by treatment prolongation. As a matter of fact and according to the WHO, if a patient has completed for example the course of 6 months of anti-tuberculosis therapy and is not cured, he or she is declared as treatment failure.

2. I am still not satisfied with the answers the authors give for having had to extract their data from secondary data sources in a prospective cohort study. The fact that Penang General Hospital has well trained staff and record keeping system does not allow one to easily believe that the authors ascertain that the data they collected from these sources are valid.

General comments: There are minor editorial corrections to be made. For example the first paragraph of Page 5 could be written as follows: “Based on the WHO recommendations and the gaps in the existing literature the aims of this study was to evaluate the treatment outcomes of new smear positive PTB patients as well as determine risk factors for unsuccessful treatment outcome
and longer treatment duration".