Reviewer's report

Title: Low sensitivity of a urine LAM-ELISA in the diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis

Version: 7 Date: 8 July 2009

Reviewer: Stephen Lawn

Reviewer's report:

Many thanks for asking me to review the revised version of this manuscript. The authors have thoroughly addressed the issues raised. The results section is easier to follow. Figure 1 showing the additional data points is much clearer.

A few remaining points to be addressed:

1. The finding in multivariate analysis that HIV status but not sex was independently associated with positive LAM results is important and yet is buried in the text. I suspect that presentation of these data (patient characteristics) and the urine parameters in one unified table might be helpful rather than separating these between text and Table 5.

2. The Discussion refers to analysis of the association of LAM results and CD4 count, but these data are not mentioned in the Results section.

3. Figure 1. The dashed line showing the ELISA cut-off at OD 0.1 should be labelled or referred to in the figure legend.

4. A study found the same ELISA assay to have poor sensitivity for diagnosis of pleural TB when applied to pleural fluid samples and this might be referenced: Dheda K et al PLoS ONE 2009;4:e4689.

5. Another study has recently been published on-line and might also be referenced. This provides data that support the authors’ conclusion that the LAM assay may particularly have utility in HIV-infected patients. In the study, time to diagnosis of TB (predominantly smear-negative, culture-positive) was considerably shortened as time to culture positivity is so prolonged in the context of low organism load in sputum. (Lawn et al. AIDS 2009;23:epub ahead of print). http://journals.lww.com/aidsonline/Abstract/publishahead/Urine_lipoarabinomannan_assay_for_tuberculosis.99827.aspx (Apologies for referring to my own study).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'