Reviewer's report

Title: Time Delays in Diagnosis of Tuberculosis: A Systematic Review of Available Evidence

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Reviewer: Joseph Beyene

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript presents a systematic review with the objective of summarizing patient, health-care system and total delays to diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis; and compares low and middle against high income countries with respect to delays. Overall the manuscript is written very well.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The authors have not included EMBASE as one of the databases for their search. EMBASE is a widely used database in doing systematic reviews. My experience is that the overlap between MEDLINE and EMBASE can at times be very small. By excluding EMBASE, the authors may have potentially missed many useful studies that could have been included in the systematic review to answer their scientific question, which will make the review less rigorous than a high quality systematic review would be expected. Is there a reason why the authors chose not to include EMBASE?

2) The Medline search is limited to the time period from 1990 to 2006. Is there any rational why the search went only as far as 2006? One of the strengths of a systematic review is that it is often up-to-date by the time the review appears in the literature. I strongly suggest making the search as up to date as possible.

3) The “Methods” section is limited in describing the analytical strategies the authors used for summarizing data. For example, data are described graphically using Box plots. This and any other data summarization approaches should be described in the “Methods” section. Issues around sensitivity analysis and potential for publication bias should be described adequately.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) The title doesn’t need the qualifier “of Available Evidence”.

2) The 1st sentence, 1st paragraph of the discussion section gives the impression that a meta-analysis was included in the manuscript. The manuscript includes ONLY a systematic review without a formal meta-analysis.

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