Reviewer's report

Title: "Cough officer screening" improves detection of nosocomial pulmonary tuberculosis

Version: 2 Date: 16 December 2009

Reviewer: Cynthia Bin-Eng Chee

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:

1. In response to my query (Q1) if all three investigations (chest radiograph, sputum AFB smear and sputum TB culture) were undertaken for each patient picked up by the COS whom the physician decided to investigate for TB, the authors had responded that the physician could choose between chest radiograph and sputum smear/culture. Yet, under “Tuberculosis diagnostic procedures” it is stated that three sets of sputum were collected from each patient who tested positive in the COS system. Could the authors please clarify?

2. Results, last paragraph: “It took as long as 14 days for some patients to be diagnosed with TB in Stage I, but it was reduced to 12.5 days in Stage II”. These numbers are median number of days (as stated under table3). This sentence should be re-worded. Perhaps the authors could report separately the time to diagnosis for those who were smear negative.

3. The response to Q4 did not address my question, which was whether there were any demographic or clinical factors which could identify patients for better targeting of the COS.

4. The suggestion that the COS should be implemented in the Internal Medicine Department as the majority of COS (+) patients were in this department should be substantiated by demonstrating that the yield of this system is high in this department. Data showing the distribution of patients by departments was also not given.

Minor essential revisions:

1. Abstract, Methods, line 2: September 2005 should be 2004
2. Background, third paragraph, line 2 “The number of TB cases....” should be “The incidence of TB cases....”

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests.