Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving detection and notification of tuberculosis cases in students in Shaanxi province, China: an intervention study

Version: 1 Date: 22 July 2010

Reviewer: Ari Probandari

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1. Major Compulsory Revisions:
- Background, Paragraph 2: “CDCs use smear examination and X-ray to diagnose TB or exclude it.” I think that you should put some additional sentences to support/explain that statement, in order to give description to the reader whether the diagnostic procedure is coherent with International standard for TB care.
- Methods: In order to help the international reader to understand the context of your study, I suggest you to briefly describe about the setting of university hospitals in China (in term of the medical services provided, staffs etc) in some sentences before study design and population.
- Methods: You should mention about your efforts to prevent any “spill over effect” from your intervention.
- Methods: “The definition of pulmonary of TB suspects was defined as persons with cough, sputum production or hemoptysis for more than 3 weeks, and abnormal chest X-ray findings.” You should explain what kind of guideline you used in defining the pulmonary of TB suspects. Is it a national guideline of TB program? In the revised ISTC (Tuberculosis Coalition for Technical Assistance, 2009), standard 1 mentioned that “All persons with otherwise unexplained productive cough lasting two-three weeks or more should be evaluated for tuberculosis.” Thus, based on the ISTC, there is no need to examine for abnormalities in chest-X ray to define suspect for Tuberculosis.
- Methods, Paragraph 2: You mentioned about the inclusion criteria for university hospitals for being selected in this study, but it is not clear how you select five paired university among the universities fulfilled the inclusion criteria. I suggest you for further description on how you select the universities as well as what is/are the criteria(s) used for matching the universities.
- Methods in the abstract and main manuscript: You should mention about the statistical test you used in your study.
- Result: You should mention about the p value of the difference among each indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention in the result sections (refer to table 4).
- Discussion: You should relate your results in Table 5 to the sentence “only the tracing arrival rate did not improve satisfactory” in paragraph 4. If the TB suspects were treated at TB hospitals or in general hospitals, did it mean that they were not treated under DOTS strategy? You should explain about table 5 in further.

- Discussion: You do not mention about limitation(s) of your study. I suggest you to describe it in the discussion section.

- Discussion: I think you should add some sentences to relate your findings in relation with the existing policy in Public-Private Mix for TB control. It is essential to the reader to learn the lessons from the study (China context) to the international context.

- Conclusion, the last sentence: “As a next step, we recommend that the PPM cooperation should be widened to include all districts in the province and TB hospitals and general hospitals CDCs in order to also improve management of TB suspects identified here.” I recommend you to limit your recommendation into: “As a next step, we recommend that the PPM cooperation should be widened to include all university hospitals in China.” I am thinking that it might be rather different of process and result if you conduct the intervention in general and TB hospitals. Your study focuses in the university hospitals, thus your recommendation should not be away from your study context.

- Table 1, the definition of tracing rate: I am rather confused about the term “....did not arrive at the CDC directly”. What do you mean by this term? I would like to suggest you to mention certain time as in the standard used in China (for instance ...did not arrive at the CDC after a week? from the suspect identification date?)

2. Minor Essential Revisions:

- Background, Paragraph 4: I suggest that the purpose of the study was revised into: “The purpose of this intervention study was to improve referral and tracing of TB suspects in the university hospitals through cooperation between the university and CDCs in Shaanxi province.”

- Table 3 line 3: language revision: from “Staff specifically assigned for TB control” into “Staff specifically assigned for TB control”.

- Table 5: I am confuse about the title of Table 5. I might suggest the revision into “Reasons for TB patients not to arrive at the CDC after the tracing process.”

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.