Author's response to reviews

Title: TB Tracer Teams in South Africa: Knowledge, Practices and Challenges of Tracing TB Patients to Improve Adherence

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Author's response to reviews: see over
14 August, 2013  
RE: MS:  5811794489701865  
Manuscript revision entitled “TB Tracer Teams in South Africa: Knowledge, Practices and Challenges of Tracing TB Patients to Improve Adherence”

Dear Dr. Colleen Hanrahan,

Thank you so much for your careful review of “TB Tracer Teams in South Africa: Knowledge, Practices and Challenges of Tracing TB Patients to Improve Adherence”. We appreciate your feedback and believe that incorporating your suggestions into the manuscript as improved it tremendously.

Your one compulsory revision:
“Methods or introduction would benefit from a short, 1 sentence description specifying tracer activities. This puts the findings in better context- was tracing conducted at the household, visits made, in pairs, skill level of tracer, mode of transport, etc. Authors should consider making specific and concrete recommendations in the discussion-- N95 masks for tracers and appropriate education on their use.”

We have added a sentence as you suggested, to describe the tracing activities more specifically. We also have a citation for a previous paper that was written about this intervention that has more detail.

One discretionary revision:  
Discussion page 15: Authors should highlight 3 I WHO policy
The importance of tracing patients has been highlighted in the discussion, however as this intervention was to trace TB patients who are potentially going to default their treatment and not contacts we didn’t this it was critical to discuss the WHO’s 3 Is which include intensified case finding.

Thank you again for your suggestions.

Sincerely,

Claire Bristow

Dear Dr. Carrie Tudor,

Thank you so much for your suggestions and review of “TB Tracer Teams in South Africa: Knowledge, Practices and Challenges of Tracing TB Patients to Improve Adherence”. We are pleased to include your feedback in the final manuscript and think it has certainly improved the content. Below are specifics on how we have incorporated your comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Please provide clarification as to whether or not efforts were made to follow up
with facilities or tracer team leaders to improve the response rate. Were questionnaires sent out more than once or did you call the TB managers at each facility or send reminders to complete and return the questionnaires? If so, what methods did you use?

We have added two sentences to the discussion section describing our efforts to improve response rates. “Our efforts to improve response rates included calling and emailing districts and individuals to remind them to return the questionnaires. Many of those currently at the districts were not involved at the time of the tracer project and therefore didn’t send feedback and couldn’t be included in the study”. This study was completed after the initial project implementation and therefore many individuals involved had already left their positions and couldn’t be located.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Please add the statistical test used for the comparisons made in Table 2. This is not described in the Analysis section.
   Thank you very much for pointing this out, we have added it to the methods.

2. Under the Analysis section paragraph 2 please clarify what is meant by “For characteristics and questions that were common...”
   We have clarified this by “characteristics and questions that were asked to both tracer and non-tracer facility participants…”

3. Please explain if there were differences in response rates by province or other geographic divisions (e.g. rural/urban) that may influence the generalizability of the findings?
   We have added this sentence to the discussion: “However, response rates varied little between the provinces that participated in the evaluation.”

Again, thank you for your careful review.

Sincerely,

Claire Bristow