Author's response to reviews

Title: HIV prevalence in tuberculosis patients in Israel, 1999-2011: A retrospective cohort study

Authors:

Zohar Mor (zohar.mor@rml.health.gov.il)
Moshe Lidji (islung1@012.net.il)
Daniel Chemtob (daniel.chemtob@moh.health.gov.il)
Noa Cedar (noa.cedar@moh.health.gov.il)
Itamar Grotto (itamamr.grotto@moh.health.gov.il)

Version: 2 Date: 22 August 2013

Author's response to reviews:

August 22nd, 2013

To:
Editor in Chief
BMC Public Health

Dear Editor,

Re: Tuberculosis and HIV co-infection in Israel, 1999-2011

Attached please find the above manuscript that we wish to submit for review in the BMC Public Health. In this study, we describe HIV prevalence among all 5502 tuberculosis patients reported in Israel during the last 13 years. We found that the average HIV prevalence among TB patients was 4.6%, higher among non-Israeli born than in Israeli-born. TB/HIV co-infection rates have generally decreased in non-Israeli-born, while increased in Israeli-born.

Most of the studies focusing in TB/HIV co-infections were performed in developing countries, which are characterized by high burden prevalence. However, in most developed countries, TB/HIV co-infection is not sufficiently covered in the existing literature. It may be that data confidentiality precludes cross-matching the notification of HIV-status of tuberculosis patients. Israel is an exception, as both National TB and HIV registries are based on patients' names and identification numbers, and are managed at the same department, enabling a periodical identified cross-matching, ensuring completeness of reporting and reducing timeliness. In addition, we were also able to cross match with the National Citizens Census to update with fatalities and those who left the country. This study adds updated information pertaining to TB/HIV co-infections in a developed country. It outlines the sensitivity of industrialized countries to migration from developing countries, and highlights the importance of screening.

As most developed countries face similar influx of migrants from developed
countries characterized by high TB/HIV countries, this long term study is of interest for most readers. The BMC Public Health is our best choice given the global view of the Periodical. Pulmonologists, infectious disease, public health practitioners, as well as and program managers will be able to make use of the findings of this paper. All authors have approved this manuscript, contributed significantly to the work and the manuscript has not been previously published or being considered for publication elsewhere. As the manager of the department of TB and AIDS in the Ministry of Health I had a full access to all data bases.

As an associate editor in the BMC Public Health myself, I hope the article will be of interest for the Journal.

Sincerely,
Zohar Mor