Reviewer's report

Title: Risk Factors for treatment delay in pulmonary tuberculosis in Recife, Brazil

Version: 2 Date: 24 January 2005

Reviewer: Richard Coker

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an important subject that is well-researched and coherently presented.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Background: Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The authors note 'two approaches have been used to define a cut off point ...for an acceptable delay.' The paper would be strengthened by an acknowledgment that the 'start point' from which delays are measured is uncertain. And perhaps more importantly that the assumption made by many authors, that symptom development and transmission dynamics are intimately correlated may not be as robust as is alluded to. This has important implications for how such research in interpreted.
Reference 4 addressed both patient AND health service delays.
No mention is made of Rodger A et al (BMJ 2003; 326: 909-10) which highlights different ethnic and sex outcomes from those described.

Methods
Issues around recall bias need to be addressed more fully. For example, was information from patients compared with information gained from family doctor and hospital notes?
What was the timing of the interviews in relation to diagnosis? How were diagnostic methods accounted for (e.g. smear negative, culture positive)?

Results
Did those cases excluded because of a lack of information differ from those recruited in any characteristics (age, sex, institutional recruitment etc)?

Was the question regarding the period of delay drawn from an a priori hypothesis or developed post hoc? The authors seem to suggest it was post hoc and this should be made explicit.

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Minor

Minor typos and grammatical errors occur throughout

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests