Reviewer's report

Title: The presence of a booster phenomenon among contacts of active pulmonary tuberculosis cases: a retrospective cohort.

Version: Date: 21 November 2006

Reviewer: Murli L Mathur

Reviewer's report:

General
It is a very good article which has attempted to find out importance of two-step TST in contacts of TB patients. The question posed by the authors new and well defined. The methods are appropriate and well described. The title and abstract convey what has been found.

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

It has been concluded that prevalence of boosting was 8%, though authors were not sure whether an increase in the second tuberculin reaction size was due to a new M.tb infection or due to a recall of delayed hypersensitivity previously established by infection with Mycobacterium tuberculosis (M.tb) or BCG vaccination that has waned over the years. Not developing active TB in 24 months cannot rule out chances of recent tuberculin conversion due to new infection in these subjects. This conclusion must be taken with caution and this point can be elaborated in the discussion.

Since period of follow up was only 2 years, the observation of subjects not developing active TB in this period may not be taken as a criterion to undermine importance of two step TST strategy for a TB Control Program in a setting with high prevalence of TB. This point can also be highlighted in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In abstract “The mean age of contacts with boosting reaction was 42.3 ± 21.1 and with no boosting was 28.7 ± 21.7 (p=0.01).” Can be written like “The mean age of contacts with boosting reaction was 42.3 ± 21.1 and with no boosting was 28.7 ± 21.7 (p=0.01).” (If 42.3 conveys 42.3 years but if it is 42 years and 3 months then it should be 42.25). Similar corrections may be done elsewhere in the manuscript.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests.'