Author's response to reviews

Title: Tackling tuberculosis patients' internalized social stigma through patient centred care: An intervention study in rural Nicaragua

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Responses to reviewer

We wish to thank John DH Porter for the valuable comments done to improve this paper. We tried to answer as clearly as possible to his remarks

1. Page 9, 10. It would be useful to have more information on the bias around the collection of the information for the stigma scale. For example, were subjects aware of the process and the importance of a change between their initial response and their second response? How did you deal with this? How was the information collected?

A paragraph has been added on the discussion section

2. Information on ethics review

Paragraph has been added on the method section

3. The paper begins with the word “we”. Who is this? Does it include the government?

We tried to make clearer in the “setting and population “ part of the “methods” section, the role of each stakeholders, including ministry of health, in this project

4. There needs to be greater clarity around the study versus the work of the National TB Control Programme in Nicaragua. A positive aspect of this work is the close relationship that is apparent between the researchers and the NTP, but it is difficult to understand what roles are being played by the different groups and how this came about. For example, did the researchers approach the government or did the government approach the researchers knowing the type of work they conducted? Did the government conceive the concept of TB clubs, or was this the work of the researchers?

A paragraph has been added on the stakeholders roles in this project

5. Page 2. First paragraph line 10. Need to make it clear that you have chosen to refer to “internalized stigma” rather than “perceived stigma”.

A sentence has been introduced in the introduction

6. Page 2 Second paragraph. Last line. What do you mean by equilibrating power sharing between health personnel and patients?

“equilibrating” has been changed by “increasing” (the meaning should be “we tried to give more power to the patient in the health care provider – patient interaction”)

7. Page 2. Methods. 3rd paragraph last line. What contextual factors are you talking about?

This has been clarified in the methods section

8. Page 3 Second paragraph. “because of their need to be strengthened”. How is this going to happen. The issues you are discussing are not the classical TB indicators.

A sentence has been added on the method section

9. Page 3. The process before the implementation. Important link with the government. More clarity on this process would be useful. I presume that the government was interested in linking with the research questions?
We have included more details on the role played by government and other stakeholders

10. Page 3. Last paragraph. Need more information on “patient centred home visits”. What do they consist of? How will they lead to the changes you are looking for?

More explanation on patient centered home visit has been added

11. Page 4. First paragraph, last line. How does reference 16 links with references 17 and 18?

A sentence has been added to insist on the link between self-esteem and internalized stigma

12. Page 4. Outcome measurement. First paragraph “we adapted a scale to measure the TB internalized social stigma”. What do these look like. ?Refer to table. Need to have some idea of the scale before you describe how it was constructed.

Reference has been made to table 4 in the text.

13. Page 5. “Operational analysis” more information on what this is.

A paragraph has been added to explain shortly operational analysis methodology.

14. Page 5. Context exploration and intervention design. Who were the external researchers? You?

Yes. A sentence has been added on the text.

15. Page 5. Introduction of the intervention package. I think the package includes all 3 components stated on page 3?

A sentence has been added in the text

16. Page 7. Lots of context specific information. Are there certain themes that come through in the analysis?

This is explained in the discussion section

17. References. Need to have full references note 1, 19, 26.

Corrected

18. Figure 1 page 13. Can you expand this figure to provide more information on the process?

Figure was indeed expanded to make clearer the steps before the implementation

19. There is no information on ethics review of this proposal. Was the proposal reviewed? If so, by whom? What is the process for ethics review?

A para on ethical review has been added in the method section

What next?

A paragraph has been added on the influence of this project on Nicaraguan national TB program