Reviewer's report

Title: Tuberculosis screening and follow-up of asylum seekers in Norway. A cohort study.

Version: 4 Date: 27 March 2009

Reviewer: Connie Erkens

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Major Compulsory Revisions
I find the structure of the paper has much improved from the previous version, but I feel not all previously mentioned comments have been sufficiently attended to.

1. I would like to refer to the previous comment number:
"3: The general content of the study forms has been described in the revised version under “Data collection”, and the headline changed from the previous “follow-up registration”.
The new text: "Both forms collected health information. This included questions about TB and follow-up in addition to other information about addresses or relocations of study participants." is too general to give the reader real insight in the nature of the questionnaires (open/closed), in particular about the questions on follow-up. Alternatively a copy/example of the (translated) questionnaires in an annex would be informative.

2. The suggestion to present the result of the study endpoints in a flow chart is only partly followed. The new figure 1 gives a good insight in the flow of asylum seekers to different levels of care. However a flow diagram or table containing the figures to support the written text in the ‘results / study endpoints section’ is still much needed.

3. I would like to refer to the previous comment number:
17: The revised and rewritten version of the “Methods- study population” and “Results- the follow-up study group” will hopefully clarify that the inclusion criteria was “inclusion for follow-up” and that information about the screening results of the whole cohort was also part of the study.

4. If the coverage / yield of the screening was also an objective of the study, this should be mentioned in the ‘aim’ of the study on page 7 and in the abstract, and also the conclusion in the abstract.

5.
The prevalence reported in the results section in the abstract and the results/study endpoint section (1028/100,000) differs from the conclusion section, where a different denominator (all asylum seekers) was used. It should be clearly stated which prevalence is relevant for the conclusion of the paper.

Minor Essential Revisions

6.Methods/ study population page 7:
The section mixes method and results, particularly where a description of the group asylum seekers is given.

7.page 8:
The line on IGRA is not relevant for the article and can be omitted.

8.data collection page 8:
'Data on demographics and 'initial'(?) screening results'

9.Results
page 10
study end points:
First line: 'All..... guidelines' is not a result but point for the discussion.

10.
'Among 1326..., of whom 'significantly'...." The number and proportion of Africans / other nationalities should be mentioned too.

11.
'Of the 314 ....., there were signinificantly....'
The number and proportion of parrenchymal/other findings should be mentioned too.
The number and proportion of Africans / other nationalities should be mentioned too, even if no significant difference.

12
'The encounter....(range 0-124)'. Which percentage was seen within 'acceptable' time fram (e.g. 13/26 weeks)?

page 11:

13.
"The median time from the referral was received till the internist consultation took place was 10 weeks. " should be rephrased.

14.
Of the 23 cases identified, how many were detected through the screening programme?
Discussion:

page 12:

15. refer to the number of TB cases detected through screening.

16. Did you find any TB cases among the remaining 27% in the TB register?

Limitation of the study

17. "Information .... patient records". Explain how did this influence the results / is this relevant for the conclusion of the study

18. "We do not know....those that did." Unclear how this influences the results of your study. Do you think municipalities who did not respond, are more likely not to adhere to the guidelines? Did you observe a higher proportion TB cases detected outside the screening programme in these municipalities?

19. "we had no access.... asylum seekers LEAVING the country.."

page 13:

20. "Lack of a ....sent". This sentence is not clear: don't you mean 'A personal identifier could have INCREASED the cases...."? Otherwise this is a strength not a limitation.

21. "....observed study outcomes" which outcome do you referr to"coverage and yield or compliance to national guidelines?

Study endpoints

22. The coverage of entry screening was not previously stated as an objective for the study.

23. 'Some screening results....included advice...specialists" These results were not previously mentioned in the result section. It is not clear what 'advice' refers to, and if / how this information was collected systematically in the questionnaire, as it was not described in the method section.

page 14
24. 'Thus...authorities'. See comment in result section: how large is this group?

25. "This was... organisational hiccup....". This terminology is unclear.

26. "Some selection..." Who did the selection?

27 'THe guidelines.....>15mm SHOULD BE referred.."

28. 'They were.... explain this" On what information is this based? Did you collect this in the questionnaires or is it based on other sources? If you have collected in the questionnaires, it should be presented as a result.

29. 'The median time....arrival REFERRAL LETTER...10 weeks'. This a result not previously mentioned.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'