Reviewer's report

Title: Tuberculosis recurrence and mortality rates in successfully treated tuberculosis patients in southern Ethiopia: retrospective cohort study

Version: 2 Date: 14 April 2009

Reviewer: kolappan pillai

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revision:
1. Recurrence rate can be restricted to smear positive patients only. Smear negative and EPTB may be excluded from the analysis of recurrence of TB as the diagnosis of recurrence is ambiguous.
2. Recurrence can be reported separately for cured cases and completed cases.
3. The explanation for including mortality among cured and completed cases only for studying long term impact of DOTS strategy is not convincing. Generally mortality reports include all cases and mortality rate reported from this study may not be comparable with results of such studies. I suggest mortality reports (both mortality rates and excess mortality) can be excluded and only recurrence can be reported.
4. Average duration of follow up is reported as 3.9 years. But majority of patients were followed up for periods less than this average. This can not be called long term follow up. Normally in recurrence studies, cured smear positive cases will be followed up for a defined period of follow up and results reported as % of cases recurred in a specified period of follow up. But this study has differential follow up for different annual cohorts. In this study recurrence rate/100PYO expressed as %/ annum can only be reported.

Minor essential revision:
1. The explanation for the query on the survival curve is not clear. My query is not answered. I want to know how many patients were recruited from each year from 1998 to 2006. This information is not furnished. According to the curve farmers and non farmers were followed up for 9 years. Mention the numbers followed in each group. Do they add up to 725 cases?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.