Reviewer's report

**Title:** Systematic review of cost and cost-effectiveness of different TB-screening strategies

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 20 March 2011

**Reviewer:** Benjamin NGANDA

**Reviewer's report:**

Major compulsory reviews

I find this paper rather hard to follow. I think there is a lot of mix-up in reviewing the literature on costing and cost-effectiveness of the same. To the best of my understanding, based on this paper, the screening of health care workers and close contacts for LTBI and active TB appears to be the focus of the alternative strategies. Assuming a unique outcome (and it is not clear from the paper what exactly that outcome is), then it is possible to evaluate the cost or effectiveness of any of three possible screening strategies:

1. TST only strategy
2. IGRA only strategy
3. TST first, IGRA second strategy.

It appears that the objective of the paper is to review the literature to establish the conclusiveness or otherwise of the cost-effectiveness of these strategies. However, it is rather difficult to follow-up the arguments advanced in the paper in reviewing the various papers identified because there is no consistency in the review of the alternatives for costing or cost-effectiveness being analyzed. There is need to put this clear from the onset. One gets the impression that the reviewed papers, though apparently dealing with the costing of different strategies for screening of LTBI, have different intentions. Some are costing only the testing, some include follow-up and treatment costs, etc. Economic evaluation requires clear-cut/unique outcome to be costed appropriately.

There is not sufficient review of the methodology adopted in each paper reviewed, its strengths/weaknesses, etc. Consequently, we get statements like “the total cost of screening and treating these 100 HCWs was minimized at ...”, “… used a decision analytic model to simulate the costs of screening for LTBI in close contacts over a two year period.” There is therefore need for a more focused elaboration of the methodology of each reviewed paper, highlighting the outcomes being costed, the approach adopted and also any assumptions used.

**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