Reviewer’s report

Title: The magnitude and factors responsible for delay in Tuberculosis management in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: A cross sectional study.

Version: 1 Date: 22 March 2008

Reviewer: Mohammed Yassain

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript “The magnitude and factors responsible for delay in tuberculosis management in Dar-el-Salaam, Tanzania: A cross sectional study” assesses one of the important issues related to TB control programme activities. The authors reported the magnitude of delay in TB care at different levels of health systems and risk factors related to delay among TB patients attending public and private health facilities in urban settings in Tanzania.

Major compulsory revisions
The manuscript has several limitations and inconsistencies.

As the characteristics of patients who attend the public and private health services are often different, the manuscript could be improved by re-analysing the data and presenting the possible corresponding difference in risk factors.

The conclusion seems biased towards patients’ delay and addressing it although the authors reported that there are serious problems related to the health service including protracted diagnostic process where sputum samples were not collected as recommended from more than 63% the patients, furthermore, these problems were not discussed in the relevant sections at all.

1. Abstract: The abstract should be explicit and a summary of all relevant information should be presented clearly.
   a. Design - it is not clear what was surveyed, how the survey was conducted and which instruments were used to collect the data. This includes some of the definitions and technical words.
   b. Result:
      i. should include numbers not only percentages,
      ii. how significant the risk factors mentioned were significantly associated with delay
   c. Conclusion: could be expanded - the main risk factors for delay and what should be done to address them

2. Introduction: the source of some of the figures (estimated prevalence...) and comments should be included

3. Methods: the flow of information is not clear; the paragraph on analysis could be included as the last part of the methods.
a. No references for the statistical packages used and it is not clear at least to me, why the authors want to adjust variables for sex as far as they use multivariate analysis which would control confounders/interaction? Was there any reference for the definitions and time intervals periods used?
b. It is not clear what information and how the information was collected and what instruments were used.
c. It was mentioned that only “confirmed cases TB” were interviewed, but no mention of how TB was confirmed among this group; was it by smear microscopy (how specimens were collected?, what is the definition for smear-positive TB case?) or by culture. How about other TB cases (smear-negative, EPTB)? A brief description of the routine diagnostic process would be necessary.

4. Result:

a. The first para, should be revised; The mean age (SD) was 35.1 (12.1) “years and 71.5% (454/635) of the participant were 18 to 40 years old.” And delete the last sentence.
b. Page, Para 2: move the first and 3rd sentence to the methods section.
c. Page 8, para 2, it would be better to use median than mean for duration of illness as it seems there are outliers (the SD is very wide)
d. Page 8, para 4. Inconsistent numbers and percentages when calculated by sex
e. Page 8, para 5, important finding, but this was not discussed at all
f. Page 9, last para. Same question as 3.a
g. Revise tables:
i. Table 1: present the characteristics of patients for patients from private and public health facilities
ii. Table 2: include p values in the last column,
iii. Table 3: define “severe disease” as footnote, traditional healer - wrong number?
iv. Table 4: include the adjusted odds ratios

5. Conclusion:

a. Page 10, line 5; delete the sentence “However...”,
b. Same page, line 8: Although there was a study... which study? reference.

Thank you

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable
**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.