Reviewer's report

Title: A Retrospective Review of a Tertiary Hospital's Isolation and De-isolation Policy for Suspected Pulmonary Tuberculosis

Version: 2
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Reviewer: Gau-Jun Tang

Reviewer's report:

The aim of the study was to evaluate the efficiency of author's hospital's current protocol for isolating and de-isolating patients with suspected pulmonary TB.

The study is to retrospectively review 202 patients with suspected pulmonary TB and admitted to isolation ward. 121 patients were smear negative and were subsequently de-isolated. According to institution's infection control policy requires patients to have at least 3 negative sputum smears before they can be de-isolated. They found 24 patients (20%) were de-isolated before the results of three negative smears were obtained.

In the abstract result stated “17% of patients were subsequently diagnosed with TB, none of whom were de-isolated prematurely.”

This result neither answers the question nor support the conclusion. Author concluded that their institution’s current infection control policy for the isolation of patients with suspected pulmonary TB is robust.

Reason 1: Only small number of patients (24) was enrolled in the premature de-isolated group and was not randomized.

Reason 2: The incidence of positive TB culture between the group who follow the hospital guideline and control (who not follow guideline) was not tested.

Reason 3: The data is not consistent. In the result “page 13” stated “Of the 24 patients who were de-isolated prematurely, three patients were subsequently diagnosed with pulmonary TB after their specimens returned culture positive for M tuberculosis.” However, the abstract stated that “non of those patients had proved to be culture positive” which is contradictory to their own statement in result.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.