Reviewer’s report

Title: Recurrent tuberculosis in Finland 1995-2013: a clinical and epidemiological cohort study

Version: 0 Date: 30 May 2017

Reviewer: Randall Reves

Reviewer’s report:

General comments

This manuscript is based upon a retrospective review of all 8048 notified TB cases in Finland over an 18-year period 1995-2013. Recurrent episodes were defined those in individuals with another reported episode at least a year after the initial registration. Since most patients were treated for 6 months, the highest risk period for relapse (1st 6 months post-treatment when 69% of relapses have been reported - ref 4) is excluded and treatment failures are not counted. As noted in ref. 23, the US TB surveillance system fails to identify the most common (early) relapses as well. In addition ref. 21 refers to these as "late relapses" for this reason.

Specific comments

Introduction

P 3, line 20 - Note that relapse ascertainment in clinical trials (e.g. ref. 4) detects higher rates than surveillance studies for several reasons: inclusion of only smear-positive pulmonary TB and all recurrences including the 1st 6-12 months when 70-90% occur.

Results

A table with total denominators (e.g. "controls") by risk categories should be provided, not just the total unstratified number of 8048.

Discussion

Note that compared to similar data from ref 21 (only pulmonary TB) and 23, the 0.6% frequency of relapses is nearly identical, but does likely not include most relapses. Note that treatment failures are not included.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
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Acceptable

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