Reviewer's report

Title: Challenges in tackling tuberculosis on the Thai-Myanmar border: a qualitative study based on stakeholder perspectives

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Reviewer: Christian Auer

Reviewer's report:

This reviewer leads now the authors through the manuscript step by step and writes down what he noticed and what he thinks should be improved.

Title: it contains the word stakeholder: this is a very general word (see also line 29); it may be better to use health policy makers and health care providers. Or „health professionals“
I would re-word the title, e.g. as follows:
„Challenges in tackling tuberculosis on the Thai-Myanmar border: findings from a qualitative study with health professionals“

Line 26 and line 79: „top 22 high burden countries“ is potentially misleading (it may suggest that Myanmar and Thailand belong to the five most affected HBCs. Better to state that Myanmar and Thailand belong to the 22 HBCs.

Line 42: what is meant with “led key themes” (is it leading key themes?)

Line 91: add the word „Thai“ in front of the word „average“.

Line 94: delete the word infection.

Line 95: change the order: identifying TB patients comes first, followed by treatment adherence.

METHODS: Lines 115-117: Did anything determine if 1 or 2 key persons were approached? What about the refusal rate (how many refused to be interviewed - see also line 158?)?

Methods, data collection: this should be better structured. It seems better to first mention the three approaches used. Thus, mention in lines 128-129 the following (what follows is a suggestion):
“Data collection was three-fold: (i) collection baseline information such as TB policies, (ii) conduction of in-depth semi-structured interviews; and (iii) observations made at health care organizations." Adjust the paragraph accordingly.

Connected to this: in the methods section of the Abstract, the method observations should be mentioned.

Line 130 refers to sectors and responsibilities. Which sectors? Whose responsibilities?

The last two sentences of the paragraph on data collection should be improved
(e.g. it seems that the last sentence rather belongs to ‘data analysis’).
Line 182: if my counting is correct, it is 23, not 24.
Line 191: it seems that this should be Figure 3. Also Line 201.
Line 206: How many did not receive their section? (although this is a qualitative
study, in some instances indicating the number of respondents is appropriate –
possible also in Line 213).
Line 260 (and also lines 304-306): the following sentence does not make sense:
“There is a need to perform a local assessment of TB burdens among patients
and stakeholders”: One it should be TB burden (not burdens); two, there is no
such thing as TB burden among stakeholders.
Connected to this: you seem to say that there is a need to assess the local TB
burden (among the patients). Why is this needed? What kind of obstacles would
this lessen? Is this really needed? Aren’t the available figures about the number
of TB cases sufficient?
The quote on Lines 265-267: isn’t this rather a good illustration for the
sub-chapter on coordination and collaboration (Line 185)?
Lines 269 – 276: It may be good to more clearly express that these are the
perceptions of the respondents rather than facts (at the moment the section
seems to go in the direction of patient blaming). Note that the quote you use
(Line 278) is not blaming the patient but rather explaining why patients come late.

DISCUSSION:
a) Line 293: a task force is mentioned. Task force is mentioned for the first time
here and it is not clear what it refers to.
b) Line 302: vein = ?
c) Line 322: I would be careful with advocating self-administered treatment. You
may opt for family DOT.
d) Line 333: you mention security: this is the only time in this manuscript apart
from a mention in the Introduction section; there is nothing in the Results section
of the manuscript). As a general rule, suggestions made in the Discussion
section should refer to a finding in the Results section.
e) Line 342 states (as limitation): “the research team conducted interviews in
English”. But line 129 states: “The interviews were conducted either in English,
Myanmar or Thai.” This seems inconsistent. Please clarify (here in the discussion
section and in the methods section). Does Line 342 mean that 10 of the 31
interviews were conducted in English?

General statement: in a few instances, the wording is not correct (e.g. Line 358
where twice the word “the” should be deleted).

References: the quality of the reference section is poor! Examples:
1) Ref. 3 is not just Figueroa but also Ramon-Pardo
2) Ref 5: I tried to access it but the link did not work

Please check all references for correctness and COMPLETENESS make sure that all links work. Also, whenever a link is given, it should be stated when you accessed the link. (This is normally required; you may want to check if BMC Health Services Research requires this).

Figure 1 does not contain a lot of information. Is it not possible to indicate the various health facilities, CBOs and NGO offices on the map?

Figure 2: Why are the TB Policy Makers and the TB Service Providers presented twice (once for Thailand and once for Myanmar) but the Public Health Actors only once? Also, what really is the difference between the Public Health Actors and the TB Service Providers? Aren’t the TB Service Providers a sub-group of the Public Health Actors? When reading lines 171 to 180, it becomes a bit clearer but it seems to me that figure 2 and Lines 171 to 180 are not fully consistent.

Figure 3: kindly explain what the % means: it seems to be: “Percentage of respondents mentioning the said challenge”. Also indicate the sample size. However, more important is that there is a fundamental challenge regarding Figure 3: Table 2 lists 23 challenges but Figure 3 only presents three of them. Why were only three presented in Figure 3? (Were these three the ones with the largest difference between Thailand and Myanmar?) This needs to be explained. I suggest that you present in Figure 3 the five most commonly mentioned challenges (with two bars for each of the five challenges, as in the current Figure 3: one for Thailand and one for Myanmar) or the seven mentioned key challenges (as presented in Lines 282-286).

Slightly connected to this: Please indicate for Table 2 for each of the 23 items the number of times this item (challenge) was mentioned (or at least for the seven overarching challenges).

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