Author’s response to reviews

Title: Delay in tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment in Amhara state, Ethiopia

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Author’s response to reviews:

Point by point response

We thank the reviewer for the comments and reviews. Point by point response presented as follows:

Reviewer reports:

Sven Gudmund Hinderaker (Reviewer 1): Several things are improved, but still not ready for publishing.

One extremely important issue I forgot to mention before is ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS. There must be a section inside methods about ethical considerations. Can not publish without it. Response: thank you, ethics review and approval issue has been included in the method part of the new manuscript.

I refer to my previous 6 points in Review 1:

#1. The language needs editing. It needs proper language revision, not just your own editing.

Response: thank you, we edit and revise the language extensively and also we consult language experts. See new version manuscript.

#2. Selection of participants is improved. However, in the comments (not in paper) it is stated that "critically ill patients were excluded", which is very understandable! But this the number must be reported! You have 170 included, and 162 responded, but how many excluded? The problem is that the very ill patients MAY have different delays (not likely but possible). Therefore to trust the results you need to say out of consecutive patients how many were excluded. If very few, it is less of concern, but if 50 it may bias your results!
Response: thank you, now we have included the number of excluded critically ill patients in the new manuscript. It states “Only one TB patient who was unable to respond due to serious health conditions was excluded from the study”, line 103-104.

#3. Definitions should be in "Background", but the cut-off you should only give in METHODS, cut-off that YOU use is for this project and should be in methods as now.

Furthermore, you say Pt.delay=from symptom to first arrival at health system (HS). HEALTH SYSTEM delay is time from arrival to treatment initiation. Remember, there is often delay from DIAGNOSIS to "treatment initiation", should be very short but not always. Everybody in TB control knows that treatment should be started as soon as diagnosis is there, but we also know that reality is not always this way. You must clearly define your premises for analysis. Perhaps your data ONLY looks at PATIENT delay, be very clear about this!!

Response: thank you, definition has been included in the background section line 56-60. Regarding delay from DIAGNOSIS to treatment initiation, we did not get a TB patient with this problem.

#5. Take out ref.1, you cannot find ref and it is not needed. Ref.3: Which year? All details MUST be correct.

Response: thank you, now we take out ref.1, and ref.3 has been corrected as follows:


#6. Tables are better now. Table2 I suggest variable "Delayed health seeking" do not indicate "YES/NO", but rather "Diagnosed at first visit/Not diagnosed at first visit", it helps reader

Response: thank you so much, now "YES/NO" has been corrected as "Diagnosed at first visit/Not diagnosed at first visit" in the new version manuscript based on the reviewers’ advice.