

# Evaluation of Tuberculosis Diagnostics in Children: 1. Proposed Clinical Case Definitions for Classification of Intrathoracic Tuberculosis Disease. Consensus From an Expert Panel

5 **Stephen M. Graham,<sup>1,2</sup> Tahmeed Ahmed,<sup>3</sup> Farhana Amanullah,<sup>4</sup> Renee Browning,<sup>5</sup> Vicky Cardenas,<sup>6</sup> Martina Casenghi,<sup>7</sup>  
 Luis E. Cuevas,<sup>8</sup> Marianne Gale,<sup>9</sup> Robert P. Gie,<sup>10</sup> Malgosia Grzemska,<sup>11</sup> Ed Handelsman,<sup>12</sup> Mark Hatherill,<sup>13</sup>  
 Anneke C. Hesseling,<sup>14</sup> Patrick Jean-Philippe,<sup>5</sup> Beate Kampmann,<sup>15,16</sup> Sushil Kumar Kabra,<sup>17</sup> Christian Lienhardt,<sup>11</sup>  
 Jennifer Lighter-Fisher,<sup>18</sup> Shabir Madhi,<sup>19</sup> Mamodikoe Makhene,<sup>20</sup> Ben J. Marais,<sup>21</sup> David F. McNeeley,<sup>22</sup>  
 Heather Menzies,<sup>23</sup> Charles Mitchell,<sup>24</sup> Surbhi Modi,<sup>25</sup> Lynne Mofenson,<sup>26</sup> Philippa Musoke,<sup>27</sup> Sharon Nachman,<sup>28</sup>  
 10 Clydette Powell,<sup>29</sup> Mona Rigaud,<sup>18</sup> Vanessa Rouzier,<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey R. Starke,<sup>31</sup> Soumya Swaminathan,<sup>32</sup> and Claire Wingfield<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Centre for International Child Health, University of Melbourne Department of Paediatrics and Murdoch Childrens, Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>2</sup>International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Paris, France; <sup>3</sup>International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Dhaka, Bangladesh; <sup>4</sup>The Indus Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan; <sup>5</sup>Henry Jackson Foundation—Maternal Adolescent Pediatric Research Branch, Division of AIDS, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, <sup>6</sup>Aeras, Rockville, Maryland; <sup>7</sup>Medecins sans Frontières, Geneva, Switzerland; <sup>8</sup>School of Tropical Medicine, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom; <sup>9</sup>Medecins sans Frontières, Sydney, Australia; <sup>10</sup>Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa; <sup>11</sup>Stop TB Partnership, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; <sup>12</sup>Maternal Adolescent Pediatric Research Branch, Division of AIDS, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland; <sup>13</sup>South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative, School of Child and Adolescent Health, University of Cape Town, <sup>14</sup>Desmond Tutu TB Centre, Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa; <sup>15</sup>Department of Paediatrics, Imperial College, London, United Kingdom; <sup>16</sup>Medical Research Council Laboratories, The Gambia; <sup>17</sup>All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi; <sup>18</sup>New York University School of Medicine, New York, New York; <sup>19</sup>National Institute for Communicable Diseases, National Health Laboratory Services, Johannesburg, South Africa; <sup>20</sup>Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland; <sup>21</sup>Children's Hospital Westmead, University of Sydney, Australia; <sup>22</sup>Medical Service Corporation International, Arlington, Virginia; <sup>23</sup>International Research and Programs Branch, Division of Tuberculosis Elimination, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia; <sup>24</sup>University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Miami, Florida; <sup>25</sup>Maternal and Child Health Branch, Division of Global HIV/AIDS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia; <sup>26</sup>Pediatric, Adolescent and Maternal AIDS Branch, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, Rockville, Maryland; <sup>27</sup>Makerere University—Johns Hopkins University Research Collaboration, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>28</sup>State University of New York School of Medicine at Stony Brook, <sup>29</sup>Division of Infectious Disease, Office of Health, Infectious Disease, and Nutrition Bureau for Global Health, US Agency for International Development, Washington, DC; <sup>30</sup>GHESKIO Centers, Port au Prince, Haiti; <sup>31</sup>Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas; <sup>32</sup>National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (formerly Tuberculosis Research Centre), Chennai, India; and <sup>33</sup>Treatment Action Group, New York, New York

35 **There is a critical need for improved diagnosis of tuberculosis in children, particularly in young children with intrathoracic disease as this represents the most common type of tuberculosis in children and the greatest diagnostic challenge. There is also a need for standardized clinical case definitions for the evaluation of diagnostics in prospective clinical research studies that include children in whom tuberculosis is suspected but not confirmed by culture of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. A panel representing a wide range of expertise and child tuberculosis research experience aimed to develop standardized clinical research case definitions for intrathoracic tuberculosis in children to enable harmonized evaluation of new tuberculosis diagnostic technologies in pediatric populations. Draft definitions and statements were proposed and circulated widely for feedback. An expert panel then considered each of the proposed definitions and statements relating to clinical**

Correspondence: Stephen M. Graham, FRACP, PhD, Department of Paediatrics, Centre for International Child Health, University of Melbourne, Royal Children's Hospital, Flemington Rd, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia (steve.graham@rch.org.au).

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45 definitions. Formal group consensus rules were established and consensus was reached for each statement. The definitions presented in this article are intended for use in clinical research to evaluate diagnostic assays and not for individual patient diagnosis or treatment decisions. A complementary article addresses methodological issues to consider for research of diagnostics in children with suspected tuberculosis.

It is widely acknowledged that there is a critical need for improved accuracy of the diagnosis of tuberculosis in children [1–4]. Although acid-fast bacilli smear and sputum culture provide reliable standards in adults, in young children the diagnosis of tuberculosis is usually not confirmed microbiologically, particularly in tuberculosis-endemic settings with limited access to culture facilities. The diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis, the most common type of tuberculosis in young children, usually relies on a cluster of epidemiological, clinical, and radiological findings [1, 2]. Sputum is difficult to obtain by expectoration in young children and disease is often paucibacillary; the diagnostic yield even when combining smear and culture is usually <50% [2]. The delay in the identification of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* using conventional culture methods further decreases the clinical utility of culture in treatment decisions.

The recent surge in the development of new tuberculosis diagnostics for more rapid and accurate diagnosis [5–8] highlights the lack of standardized case definitions for prospective clinical research in children with suspected tuberculosis. Clinical definitions used to date have been inconsistent and have performed variably when evaluated [9]. Although valid for comparisons within studies, these limitations make it impossible to compare diagnostic performance across studies or to provide any data for meta-analyses [3]. It is important that studies of novel diagnostics are conducted in a range of settings and pediatric populations, including young children. There is, therefore, a need for standardized clinical case definitions that can be used for the evaluation of tuberculosis diagnostics in prospective research that includes children in whom tuberculosis is suspected but not confirmed by culture of *M. tuberculosis*.

Expert clinicians, researchers, and other opinion leaders in pediatric tuberculosis were invited to a workshop organized by the National Institutes of Health, “Critical Issues in Pediatric Tuberculosis Diagnostics Research in HIV-Infected and Uninfected Children,” that was held 28–30 June 2011. The workshop aims were (1) to obtain consensus on clinical case definitions for intrathoracic tuberculosis diagnosis in children and (2) to standardize methodological approaches for evaluation of new tuberculosis diagnostic tests in children. This article reports on the first of these aims, and an article by Cuevas et al in this issue of the *Journal* [10] reports on the second. The definitions are intended for clinical research use to evaluate diagnostic assays and not for use in making individual patient diagnoses or treatment decisions.

## METHODS FOR OBTAINING CONSENSUS

Prior to the workshop, the literature was surveyed and statements were prepared separately for each aim. For the consensus clinical case definitions, the existing literature on tuberculosis in children was reviewed for signs and symptoms, clinical case definitions, existing research case definitions, or existing systematic reviews. Similarly, for the reference standard, the existing literature was reviewed for approaches to an imperfect reference standard when a gold standard is not available. Draft definitions were circulated to experts for review and comment during a series of teleconference calls. Statements were compiled prior to the meeting and constituted the basis for discussion at the workshop.

During the workshop, an expert panel considered each of the statements relating to clinical definitions. These were modified based on expert discussions, following which edited statements underwent a vote. Formal group consensus rules were established and consensus was reached for each statement. A separate expert panel considered statements relating to diagnostic methodological approach [10]. All definitions were further reviewed in a plenary workshop session that included participants from both expert panels.

## CONSIDERATIONS ON CHALLENGES FOR DIAGNOSTIC STUDIES

### Age Considerations

Although children across the entire age spectrum should be included in tuberculosis diagnostic studies, there is a particular need to ensure the inclusion of children <10 years of age because they represent the greatest diagnostic challenge. Within this group, it is critical that the youngest children (0–2 years) are adequately represented in diagnostic studies. Although studies focusing on young children are the most critical, studies of older children and adolescents are also needed. The 10- to 18-year age group presents a different spectrum of disease manifestations, including adult-type disease, and respiratory samples can be more readily obtained.

### Disease Considerations

The diagnosis of intrathoracic tuberculosis is the focus of this discussion; improved diagnosis is vital to better define and manage tuberculosis-related morbidity and mortality in children. The case definitions are, therefore, aimed at studies

**Table 1. Clinical Case Definition Categories for Intrathoracic Tuberculosis in Children**

Clinical Diagnostic Groups	Definition of Case Categories
Confirmed tuberculosis	<p>Patients with suspected TB should be classified as “confirmed TB” when they present with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At least 1 of the signs and symptoms suggestive of tuberculosis<sup>a</sup></li> </ol> <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Microbiological confirmation is obtained<sup>a</sup></li> </ol>
Probable tuberculosis	<p>Patients suspected of tuberculosis should be classified as “probable tuberculosis” cases when they present with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At least 1 of the signs and symptoms suggestive of tuberculosis<sup>a</sup></li> </ol> <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Chest radiography is consistent with intrathoracic disease due to <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i><sup>a</sup></li> </ol> <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. There is at least 1 of the following:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) A positive clinical response to anti-tuberculosis treatment<sup>a</sup></li> <li>(b) Documented exposure to <i>M. tuberculosis</i><sup>a</sup></li> <li>(c) Immunological evidence of <i>M. tuberculosis</i> infection<sup>a</sup></li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Possible tuberculosis	<p>Patients suspected of tuberculosis should be classified as “possible tuberculosis” when they present with at least 1 of the signs and symptoms suggestive of tuberculosis<sup>a</sup></p> <p>and either</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) One of the following:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) A positive clinical response to anti-tuberculosis treatment<sup>a</sup></li> <li>(b) Documented exposure to <i>M. tuberculosis</i><sup>a</sup></li> <li>(c) Immunological evidence of <i>M. tuberculosis</i> infection<sup>a</sup></li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Chest radiography is consistent with intrathoracic tuberculosis disease<sup>a</sup></li> </ol> <p>NB: if at least 1 of (1) and (2) are both present, then this case should be classified as “probable tuberculosis.”</p>
Tuberculosis unlikely	Symptomatic but not fitting the above definitions and no alternative diagnosis established
Not tuberculosis	Fitting the diagnosis for tuberculosis unlikely but with an established alternative diagnosis.

<sup>a</sup> Defined in Table 2.

of symptomatic children with suspected intrathoracic disease due to *M. tuberculosis*. They are not intended for use in studies of diagnostic approaches for infection with *M. tuberculosis* and therefore may not be appropriate for studies that incorporate

the active investigation of possible tuberculosis in children who may not have typical or well-defined symptoms, for example, household case-finding studies or infant tuberculosis vaccine trials.

There are 2 main reasons why children with intrathoracic disease are the focus of the clinical case definitions: (1) Intrathoracic tuberculosis represents the largest burden of disease (>75%) [11, 12] and biological sampling methods are the most challenging in this group, especially in young children [2]; and (2) Forms of extrathoracic tuberculosis present with a variety of clinical features depending on the site of involvement (eg, lymph nodes or vertebrae); therefore, diagnosis involves examination of nonrespiratory samples or other investigations. Separate clinical definitions, such as those that have been proposed for lymphadenitis or meningitis caused by *M. tuberculosis*, are therefore required for research purposes [13, 14].

### Consideration of Comorbidities

Children with potentially confounding comorbidities (ie, factors that may alter the clinical presentation, disease spectrum, or diagnostic yield) should be included, especially as they often present the greatest diagnostic challenge and highest tuberculosis-associated mortality. These include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and malnutrition.

## CLINICAL CASE DEFINITIONS

In developing case definitions, the panel considered several principles to be important: (1) categorical, simplified approaches should be used to minimize subjectivity and standardize data collection; (2) case definition requirements should not render diagnostic studies unfeasible in low-resource settings; and (3) the paucity of evidence for certain case definition components should not be considered a barrier to constructing a pragmatic framework, as revisions can and will be made as new evidence comes to light. The consensus clinical case definition categories and related definition statements are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Children enrolled in diagnostic studies should be evaluated at baseline and followed regardless of initial disease classification or treatment decision. Recommended follow-up should be 2 months after treatment initiation or 2 months after baseline if untreated. Additional suggested data collection time points include 2 weeks after treatment initiation/baseline and 6 months after treatment initiation/baseline (or at completion of therapy).

*Confirmed* tuberculosis cases will be children with at least 1 sign or symptom suggestive of tuberculosis and microbiologically confirmed tuberculosis, defined as at least 1 positive culture with *M. tuberculosis* speciation from a specimen representative of intrathoracic disease (Table 2). Children with at least 1 sign or symptom suggestive of tuberculosis, but without microbiologic confirmation, will be classified as either *probable*, *possible*, *unlikely*, or *not* tuberculosis, using an algorithm (Figure 1).

**Table 2. Details and Definitions for Research Evaluation and Reporting Purposes**

1. Microbial confirmation
Definition: at least 1 positive culture (with confirmed <i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> speciation) from sputum, which could be sampled from expectorated sputum, induced sputum, nasopharyngeal aspirates, gastric aspirates, or string tests (or other relevant intrathoracic samples).
2. Clinical signs/symptoms suggestive of tuberculosis
(a) Persistent cough
Definition: persistent (>2 weeks), nonremitting cough.
(b) Weight loss/failure to thrive:
Definition: unexplained weight loss: >5% reduction in weight compared with the highest weight recorded in last 3 months.
or
Definition: failure to thrive.
1. Clear deviation from a previous growth trajectory and/or
2. Documented crossing of percentile lines in the preceding 3 months and/or
3. Weight for age z score of $\leq -2$ in the absence of information on previous/recent growth trajectory and/or
4. Weight for height z score of $\leq -2$ in the absence of information on previous/recent growth trajectory
and
Not responding to nutritional rehabilitation (or antiretroviral therapy if HIV infected)
Persistent unexplained fever
Definition: persistent (>1 week) and unexplained fever (>38°C) reported by a guardian or objectively recorded at least once.
Persistent, unexplained lethargy or reduced playfulness
Definition: persistent, unexplained lethargy or decrease in playfulness/activity reported by the parent/caregiver.
Infants 0–60 days (or neonate)
Additional <sup>a</sup> signs and symptoms suggestive of tuberculosis include
(a) Neonatal pneumonia <sup>b</sup> or
(b) Unexplained hepatosplenomegaly <sup>b</sup> or
(c) Sepsislike illness <sup>b</sup>
3. Interpretation of CXR
CXR reading procedure:
–CXR (2 views) will be read by a minimum of 2 independent and blinded readers who are experienced in reviewing CXRs in children.
–The overall quality of the CXR will be indicated.
–In the case of discordant reading, a third expert reader will be used and a final consensus achieved.
CXR reporting procedure:
–Standardized forms with predetermined terminology to describe CXR abnormalities.
–Essential radiological features with tick boxes (example in Figure 2) will be used by experienced readers.
–Predetermined yes/no options for the CXR reader.
Definition: CXR is classified as “consistent with tuberculosis” if there is a positive response for any 1 of the radiographic features, at the same location, by at least 2 expert reviewers.
4. Tuberculosis exposure
Definition: history of exposure to <i>M. tuberculosis</i> .
Reported exposure to a case of tuberculosis (household/close contact) within the preceding 24 months:
–Documented (smear positive and/or culture positive, or tuberculosis treatment).

*Table 2 continued.*

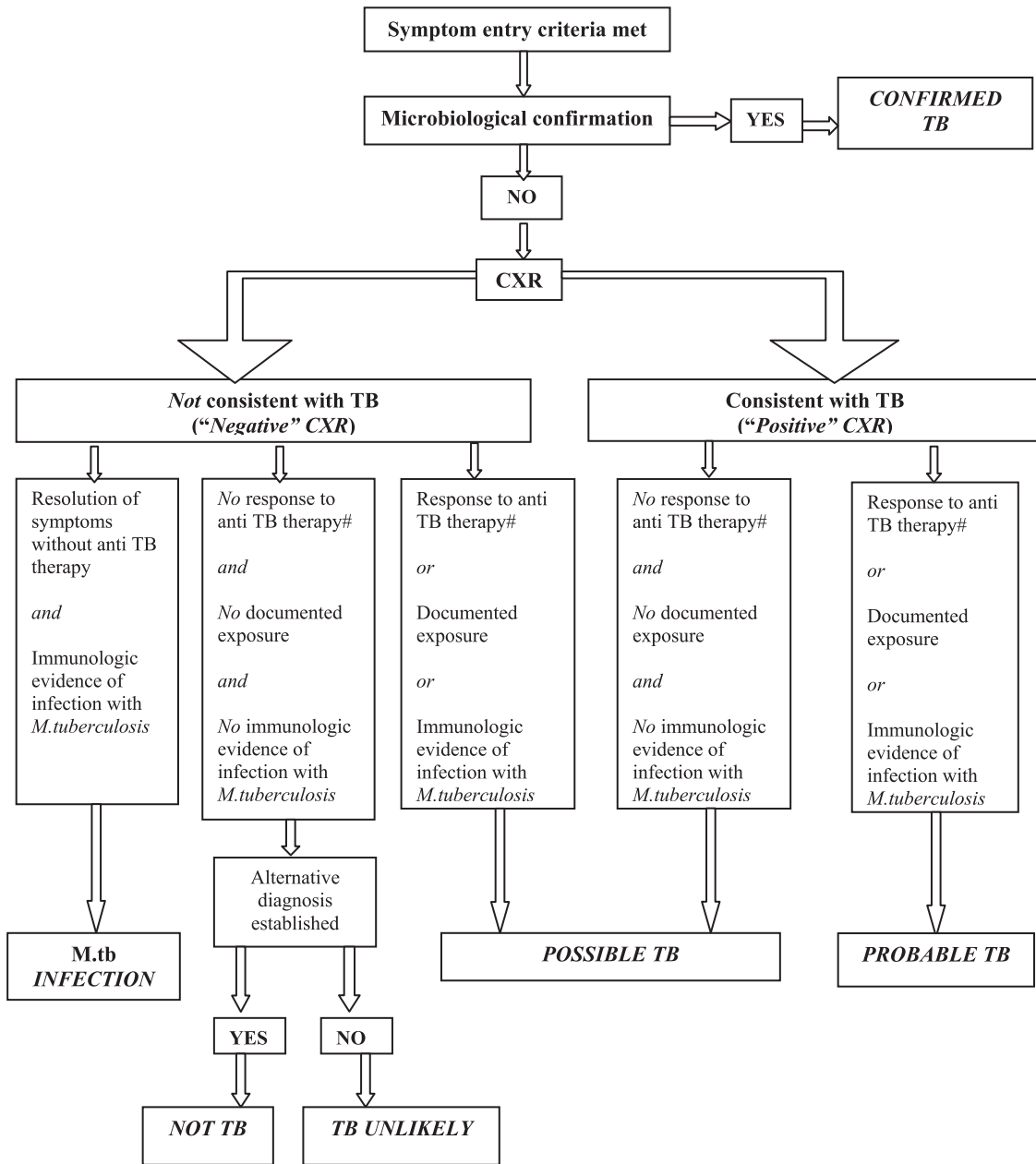
or
–Not documented but verbal report (smear positive and/or culture positive, or tuberculosis treatment).
Definition: immunological evidence of <i>M. tuberculosis</i> infection.
–A positive tuberculin skin test (using 5TU PPD or 2TU RT23) defined as
$\geq 10$ mm if HIV uninfected.
$\geq 5$ mm if HIV infected or severely malnourished.
or
A positive IGRA test
5. Response to anti-tuberculosis treatment
Follow-up: All patients enrolled in these studies should be followed after initial evaluation, regardless of the initial disease classification or decision to treat for tuberculosis. Treatment other than anti-tuberculosis treatment (eg, antibiotics for community-acquired pneumonia) and response to such treatment should be recorded.
All patients should undergo clinical assessment and data collection 2 months after baseline or after treatment initiation for those treated with anti-tuberculosis treatment. Note that not all children with symptoms will receive anti-tuberculosis treatment, and follow-up at 2 months would be a useful time (in addition to earlier assessments) to assess resolution of symptoms without anti-tuberculosis treatment and/or clinical response to alternative therapy (if any).
Additional suggested data collection time points:
–2 weeks after baseline or after treatment initiation for those treated with anti-tuberculosis treatment.
–6 months after treatment initiation for those treated with anti-tuberculosis treatment (or at end of anti-tuberculosis treatment).
Appropriate anti-tuberculosis treatment for presumed drug-susceptible tuberculosis should meet the following criteria:
(a) Treatment with standard regimens in accordance with local or international tuberculosis treatment guidelines (define in protocol).
(b) Satisfactory adherence proposed as 80% adherence by pill count or self-reported
Definition: Response to anti-tuberculosis treatment should be evaluated at 2 months after anti-tuberculosis treatment has commenced using standardized forms with tick-box options for recording (eg, improvement or not of each clinical feature suggestive of tuberculosis disease indicated as yes/no option).
Response to anti-tuberculosis treatment is defined as
1. Response to anti-tuberculosis therapy: clinical features suggestive of tuberculosis disease that were present at baseline have improved, and there is no new clinical feature suggestive of tuberculosis.
or
2. No response to anti-tuberculosis therapy: clinical features suggestive of tuberculosis disease that were present at baseline have not improved.

Abbreviations: CXR, chest radiograph; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; IGRA, interferon- $\gamma$  release assay; PPD, purified protein derivative.

<sup>a</sup> Previous symptoms are all relevant.

<sup>b</sup> If other causes are excluded or not responding to appropriate treatment thereof.

*Probable tuberculosis cases will include children with at least 1 sign or symptom suggestive of tuberculosis and a chest radiograph (CXR) consistent with intrathoracic tuberculosis disease and at least 1 of the following: (1) positive clinical response to anti-tuberculosis therapy, (2) documented*



# Response or no response to anti TB therapy is only relevant if anti TB therapy was given as determined by clinical indications. A trial of treatment should NOT be used as a diagnostic tool.

**Figure 1.** Algorithm for classification of case definitions for research reporting. #Response or no response to anti-tuberculosis therapy is only relevant if anti-tuberculosis therapy was given as determined by clinical indications. A trial of treatment should NOT be used as a diagnostic tool.

exposure to a household or close contact with a tuberculosis case, or (3) immunologic evidence of *M. tuberculosis* infection by a positive tuberculin skin test (TST) or tuberculosis interferon- $\gamma$  release assay (IGRA).

195 *Possible* tuberculosis cases will include children with at least 1 sign or symptom suggestive of tuberculosis and who have either: (1) a CXR that is not consistent with intrathoracic

*M. tuberculosis* disease and at least 1 of the following: positive clinical response to anti-tuberculosis therapy, documented exposure to a household or close contact with a tuberculosis case, or immunologic evidence of *M. tuberculosis* infection (TST or IGRA positivity) or (2) a CXR consistent with intrathoracic *M. tuberculosis* disease but none of the other characteristics listed in (1).



205 Symptomatic children who do not fit into the foregoing  
categories are either *unlikely tuberculosis* cases (if no alternative  
diagnosis is established) or *not tuberculosis* cases (if an alterna- 255  
tive diagnosis is established, for example, cardiac disease, foreign  
body aspiration, or asthma). We note that an alternative di-  
agnosis, such as pneumococcal pneumonia or bronchiectasis, 210  
does not necessarily exclude tuberculosis because of the possi-  
bility of coinfection.

Children who lack clinical symptoms or signs meeting the  
consensus definition but nevertheless demonstrate a positive 215  
culture with *M. tuberculosis*, or CXR consistent with intrathoracic  
disease due to *M. tuberculosis*, do not fall within  
the scope of these recommendations. Therefore, these children  
should not be considered as *confirmed* or *probable* cases in  
studies of new tuberculosis diagnostics, but they may be ap- 220  
propriate for inclusion in other tuberculosis research. Data on  
these potential subpopulations should be collected to inform  
the current evidence base.

## DEFINITIONS

225 The need for standardized terminology to report on exposure  
to *M. tuberculosis*, clinical signs and symptoms suggestive of  
tuberculosis, radiological findings, microbial confirmation, and  
response to treatment is paramount, to harmonize data collec-  
tion and reporting in pediatric research studies and facilitate  
comparison across studies. The consensus definitions are listed  
in Table 2. These definitions are intended for diagnostic studies  
to enable study comparability. These definitions are not intended  
to guide clinical decision making or reporting of childhood  
tuberculosis. 230

### Definition of Confirmation

235 At least 1 positive culture of *M. tuberculosis* in a sample origi-  
nating from an intrathoracic site (eg, sputum, gastric aspirate,  
bronchoalveolar lavage, or intrathoracic biopsy) is sufficient  
evidence for confirmation. Positive smear microscopy in the  
absence of a positive culture of *M. tuberculosis* is not sufficient  
to confirm tuberculosis because false-positive results can be  
due to specimen contamination with or disease caused by  
nontuberculous mycobacteria. Multiple respiratory sampling  
should always be attempted. 240

### Definition of Clinical Symptoms and Signs Suggestive of Tuberculosis

245 Standardized definitions are proposed for the most common  
presenting clinical signs and symptoms that prompt clinical  
evaluation for intrathoracic tuberculosis (Table 2). These  
definitions are for purposes of reporting of diagnostic evalu-  
ation studies of suspected intrathoracic tuberculosis cases and  
not to define criteria for enrollment in such studies. Impor-  
tance was placed on chronicity and persistence of unexplained  
symptoms despite standard treatments for cough, fever, and

lethargy, such as antibiotics for community-acquired pneu-  
monia or antimalarial therapy. It is recognized that children 255  
with intrathoracic tuberculosis may present with acute  
symptoms, especially infants, and so might be evaluated for  
a diagnosis of tuberculosis before the symptoms have become  
“persistent.” It is also recognized that children with intrathoracic  
tuberculosis may show improvement of symptoms with anti- 260  
biotics for community-acquired pneumonia as they are also  
susceptible to bacterial pneumonia. However, in this scenario,  
symptoms are likely to persist and not fully resolve without  
anti-tuberculosis treatment.

Agreement was more difficult to reach on whether the nu- 265  
tritional definitions should be broad or restrictive for the  
proposed terminology for weight loss and failure to thrive.  
Weight evaluation in settings of high tuberculosis endemicity is  
often complex because of the high prevalence and impact of  
comorbidities, such as HIV and malnutrition. Different tools 270  
exist to evaluate and report weight loss. Weight loss was defined  
as an unexplained >5% reduction in weight, compared with  
the highest weight recorded in last 3 months. The panel felt that  
either weight loss or failure to thrive could be used, but that  
using a percentage of median and standard deviation from the 275  
median such as z scores might be too technical to apply as  
a field tool. Therefore, failure to thrive might be defined by  
any 1 of 4 criteria as listed in Table 2, varying in the level of  
detail, plus a lack of response to nutritional rehabilitation  
(or antiretroviral therapy if the child is HIV infected). 280

Finally, additional clinical syndromes compatible with tu- 285  
berculosis in infants aged 0–60 days were included to reflect  
the broad spectrum of nonspecific clinical manifestations  
in that age range and to encourage inclusion of very young  
infants in research. Infants with neonatal pneumonia, un-  
explained hepatosplenomegaly, or sepsislike illness, where  
other causes are excluded or not responding to appropriate  
treatment, should be evaluated for tuberculosis when other  
causes have been excluded or when they are not responding to  
other appropriate treatment. 290

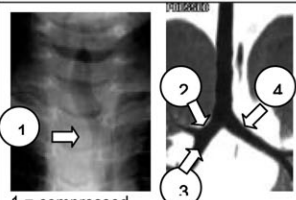
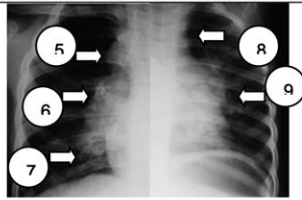
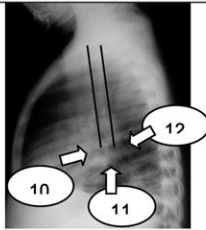
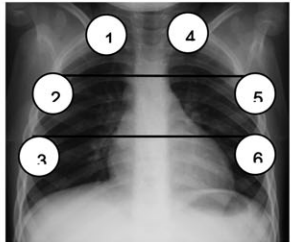
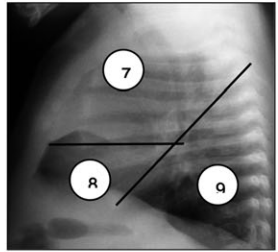
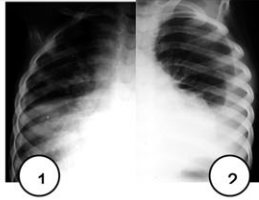
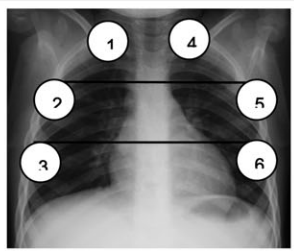
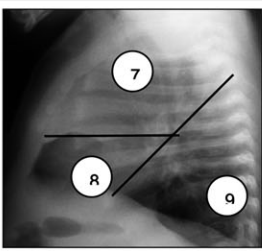
### Radiological Definitions: Procedures and Terminology

Discussions on procedures for review, reporting, and classifi- 295  
cation of CXRs for diagnostic research purposes were conten-  
tious, and agreement on the final revised statement was achieved  
by a narrow margin. The draft statement proposed a rigorous  
approach, given the pivotal role of CXR in determining  
tuberculosis diagnoses in young children with smear- and  
culture-negative disease, and the poor inter- and intraobserver  
agreement among reviewers for hilar and paratracheal  
lymphadenopathy, which are the most common diagnostic  
features expected [15]. This rigorous approach called for an  
independent review of anterior-posterior and lateral CXR  
images by 2 expert readers who were blinded to the clinical  
data, a third reader to resolve discordant opinions, and an 300

## Template Chest Radiograph Review Tool

**Instructions:**

Please indicate any number of locations of abnormality, using an 'X' in the appropriate numbered circle. Then tick only one of 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not Visible' for each category of abnormality identified (numbered 1 – 8).

<p><b>1. Airway compression and/or tracheal displacement</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>2. Soft tissue density suggestive of lymphadenopathy</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>
 <p>1 = compressed or displaced to left only    2 - 4 = compression</p>	  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto;">Lines indicate the trachea</div>
<p><b>3. Air space opacification</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>4. Nodular picture = Miliary or larger widespread and bilateral</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	
<p><b>5. Pleural effusion</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>6. Cavities    7. Calcified parenchyma (Ghon focus)    8. Vertebral spondylitis</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visible <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	 
<p><b>Technical quality</b></p> <p><b>AP view</b></p> <p><b>Lateral view</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor but readable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor but readable</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not acceptable not readable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not acceptable not readable</p>

*Acknowledgements:* CXR Review Tool developed by S. Andronikou and The South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative (SATVI).

**Figure 2.** Example of a chest radiograph (CXR) review template (Courtesy of Mark Hatherill, University of Cape Town). Note: CXR is classified as "consistent with tuberculosis" if there is a positive response for any 1 of the radiographic features at the same location by at least 2 expert reviewers.

305 assessment of the technical quality of the image. Independent  
review, which prevents bias by any individual opinion, and  
blinding to nonradiographic data, which prevents bias by the  
clinical scenario, were thought to be key elements.

310 Independent, blinded expert panel review requires suitably  
qualified reviewers who are not part of the immediate study  
team; this review process is therefore independent of routine  
case management. These experts might be pediatric radiologists,  
pediatricians, or physicians, depending on the capacity of the  
315 study setting. A reliable and secure system for capture, distri-  
bution, and storage of digital CXR images is vital. If digital  
radiography is not available, hard copy CXR films might be  
digitalized using a high-quality flatbed scanner. The contrary  
view was that these high standards might be difficult to achieve  
320 at rural field sites, particularly in developing economies with  
a high tuberculosis burden. It was felt that these stringent re-  
quirements would discourage childhood tuberculosis diagnostic  
research in low-resource settings and that the process might  
have to be adapted to local conditions.

325 The draft statement initially proposed that each CXR should  
be classified by the reviewer as “consistent with tuberculosis,”  
“uncertain,” “normal,” or “abnormal, but not tuberculosis.”  
This subjective classification was removed and replaced by an  
approach that requires a “yes” or “no” response to the presence  
of cardinal radiological features and that indicated the location  
330 of abnormal features. This revised approach does not include the  
option of indicating uncertainty and was unanimously approved.  
The descriptive terminology for abnormal radiological features  
should be predetermined and standardized, such as that pro-  
posed by Marais et al [16] or as illustrated in Figure 2. Figure 2  
335 is a sample CXR review tool that was developed for use in pe-  
diatric tuberculosis vaccine trials. Positive identification by at  
least 2 expert reviewers of any of these abnormal radiological  
features, at the same location, classifies a CXR as being “con-  
sistent with tuberculosis.”

#### 340 **Definitions of Exposure to *M. tuberculosis* and Immunological Evidence of *M. tuberculosis* Infection**

A history of exposure to *M. tuberculosis* is defined as a reported  
close contact to a person with active tuberculosis. The term  
“close contact” refers to contact within the prior 24 months  
345 either within the household or outside the household when  
there is regular, close contact such as in school or day care. The  
timing and duration of contact exposure should be recorded  
when available. As documentation of proof of exposure is often  
unrealistic in the field, a verbal report of close contact to an  
350 index case is acceptable. For research purposes, documentation  
of an index case can consist of smear and/or culture results and/  
or response to anti-tuberculosis therapy.

355 The biological diagnostic hallmark of *M. tuberculosis* infection  
is primarily based on the cellular immune response of the host,  
as evidenced by a reactive TST or a positive IGRA. A valid and

positive TST or IGRA result is considered immunological  
evidence of *M. tuberculosis* infection. Despite its recognized  
limitations, TST has been used for more than a century as an  
immunological surrogate marker for *M. tuberculosis* infection.  
360 In the context of research, albeit arbitrarily, an acceptable  
definition of a positive TST postintradermal 5TU purified  
protein derivative or 2TU RT23 (Serum Statens Institut) is  
a  $\geq 10$ -mm skin induration in an HIV-uninfected child or  
a  $\geq 5$ -mm induration in an HIV-infected or severely mal-  
365 nourished child, regardless of BCG vaccination in the neonatal  
period. A decade ago, IGRAs emerged as a potential alternative  
to TST [17]. Studies over the last 10 years in children, mainly  
in the low tuberculosis endemic setting, have demonstrated  
the improved specificity of IGRAs compared with TST, but as  
370 for TST, the sensitivity of IGRAs is variable [18] and a more  
sensitive biomarker of *M. tuberculosis* infection is required and  
is the focus of current research (see McNerney et al in this issue  
[19]). While the limitations of both tests are acknowledged,  
the panel has concluded that a positive TST or IGRA result  
375 provides evidence of *M. tuberculosis* infection for purposes of  
research reporting.

#### **Definitions of Response to Antituberculosis Treatment**

Response to therapy for intrathoracic tuberculosis requires  
treatment with a minimum of 3 appropriate anti-tuberculosis  
380 medications, and includes an understanding of the complex-  
ities of possible exposure and treatment of multidrug-resistant  
tuberculosis as well as dosing of these therapies across pedi-  
atric age ranges. The symptoms of children with tuberculosis  
usually respond promptly to anti-tuberculosis treatment  
within 1–2 months of starting therapy, and children tolerate  
385 treatment well with a very low risk of toxicity. An appropriate  
response to therapy includes weight gain (or improvement of  
failure to thrive), the resolution of symptoms within 2 months,  
and the improvement of CXR findings in the long term.  
However, treatment response lacks specificity as an indicator of  
390 tuberculosis because other infections causing similar symp-  
toms may resolve while the child is receiving anti-tuberculosis  
treatment. Furthermore, a lack of response does not exclude  
tuberculosis as a possible diagnosis. Treatment response to  
anti-tuberculosis therapy may be poor in children with tuber-  
395 culosis for a number of reasons: poor treatment adherence,  
drug-resistant tuberculosis (see Zumla et al in this issue [20]),  
coinfection with other pathogens, or underlying chronic  
lung disease. Additionally, HIV-infected children on anti-  
retroviral therapy may present with immune reconstitution  
400 inflammatory syndrome as worsening CXR and symptoms but  
does not represent tuberculosis treatment failure.

Not all children who present with symptoms suggestive of  
intrathoracic tuberculosis in the context of a diagnostic  
405 evaluation study will be treated for tuberculosis, as alternative  
diagnoses will be considered and treated accordingly. Other



treatments, such as antibiotics for community-acquired pneumonia, and response to such treatment should be routinely recorded, as the information is important for classifying children in the “not tuberculosis” category (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Formal follow-up assessment for treatment response should be at 2 months after initiation of anti-tuberculosis treatment, and is done on the basis of clinical features. Response to treatment at this time and other follow-up time points, including at the end of treatment, should be recorded on standardized forms with predetermined terminology and tick-box options for recording. Treatment of identified comorbidities and treatment response must be recorded. Additionally, adherence should be recorded and observed therapy may be needed to ensure adherence. Given the lack of an evidence-based definition for response to tuberculosis treatment as a diagnostic criterion, the panel highlighted the need for rigorous future research in this area.

## DISCUSSION

A significant proportion of the tuberculosis disease burden, morbidity, and mortality in areas with high tuberculosis prevalence occurs in children [1, 21, 22]. However, tuberculosis diagnosis is usually not microbiologically confirmed [2]. Improved tuberculosis diagnostic tests in children would not only improve individual clinical management but would allow for a more accurate determination of the global burden of tuberculosis in children, improve clinical research for the prevention and treatment of pediatric tuberculosis, and allow greater integration of pediatric tuberculosis into national tuberculosis control programs [23].

Progress in developing better tuberculosis diagnostics has been slow. There is an urgent need for a rapid, reliable, and affordable diagnostic test for tuberculosis [6]. It is critical that new tests be properly validated in children of all ages as well as in adults (Nahid et al, this issue [24]). The consequences of undiagnosed, untreated tuberculosis in young children are substantial and are exacerbated due to the rapid progression to disseminated tuberculosis [25]. Additionally, microbiological confirmation and drug susceptibility testing are essential in the context of the emerging drug-resistant tuberculosis epidemic, affecting children as well as adults [20, 26, 27]. New, improved diagnostics may provide the opportunity to expand on the definition of confirmed tuberculosis in the future [7, 10].

Because of the lack of a microbiological “gold standard,” it has been difficult to evaluate the sensitivity and specificity of clinical definitions of tuberculosis in children. Clinical scoring systems have been developed, but they lack standard symptom definition and adequate validation [4, 9, 28]. Various attempts to improve specificity of symptom definition have not performed well in some of the groups at highest risk for severe disease and poor outcomes, including children <3 years of

age, HIV-infected children, and malnourished children [29, 30]. There are examples of clinical case definitions in adults with sputum smear-negative pulmonary tuberculosis [31, 32]. However, there are important differences in clinical and radiological findings between adults and children with intrathoracic tuberculosis, as well as important epidemiological variations in high-burden settings that will affect the predictive value of clinical criteria.

The CXR is an important part of the clinical assessment for intrathoracic tuberculosis in children, and is critical to define “probable” tuberculosis cases. Therefore, the panel applied particular rigor to the development of a standardized approach to CXR assessment, including recommendation for evaluation by 2 independent readers experienced in reviewing pediatric CXRs and blinded to clinical categorization, and the use of standardized forms with predetermined terminology to describe radiologic findings.

Similarly, the panel attempted to apply rigor to the definition of response to anti-tuberculosis treatment that is based on 2 essential elements: (1) recording clinical response on standardized forms with clear definition of timeline and (2) ensuring adequacy of treatment with attention to correct dosage, adherence, drug susceptibility of the organism when known, and management of comorbidities. It is acknowledged that the evidence base in this regard needs to be expanded.

Trials using these clinical case definitions should employ robust data collection methods, using standardized and harmonized data definitions and data standards as well as standardized laboratory procedures. This will allow for the discrimination of the factors most predictive of the outcome of interest and for the refinement of elements used in the case definitions, as well as comparison between studies.

It is important to emphasize that the clinical case definitions for intrathoracic tuberculosis are not intended for clinical management but for the standardization of research results of tuberculosis diagnostics. It will be important to develop similar case definitions for extrathoracic tuberculosis in children. Finally, these definitions are not intended to be used for studies of *M. tuberculosis* infection, which will require different methodologies and will likely use TST or IGRA as the reference standard for comparison. Emerging data and high-quality evidence should inform these proposed consensus case definitions.

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