Reviewer's report

Title: Sudden cardiac death in the young (5-39 years) in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland

Version: 5 Date: 11 September 2014

Reviewer: Christian van der Werf

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Although the authors acknowledged the comments of the other reviewer and myself that the quality of the data is insufficient to provide an accurate estimate of the incidence of SCD as well as autopsy rates, I still think that the current presentation of the data is not yet completely in line with these limitations. An incidence of SCD or “presumed” SCD is provided and compared to the incidence rates in other countries, while the true incidence may be much lower (autopsy might have identified a non-cardiac cause of death) or higher (some drownings and traffic accidents may be due to SCD). Similarly, the low autopsy rates are compared with international autopsy rates, while it was unknown if autopsy was performed in a significant number of cases. I understand that the authors cannot improve the quality of the data, but feel that the statements and conclusions throughout the paper should be softened. For example, the abstract should, in my opinion, conclude that the quality of data is insufficient to provide an accurate incidence estimate and call for measures to improve the registration of SCD cases. Similarly, the discussion should start with and focus more on this issue.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. P5: It is unnecessary to detail how the institutions were contacted or provide e-mail addresses.

2. Text and Table 3: I still do not understand what “cause of death confirmed after an autopsy” means. Are these the number of cases in which the autopsy results were available? Or was autopsy also performed in the other cases and did it show a different cause of death than expected? Please change this formulation throughout the text and in Table 3.

3. Methods: I would change the subheading “Data” to “Methods”, and then restructure the paragraphs, starting with “General considerations”, followed by the two paragraphs that describe the methods of this study.

4. Table 3: As already commented on by the other reviewer, the number of cases with missing autopsy data is high. This should be clearly mentioned in the limitations section, because the low autopsy rates may actually be underestimated significantly.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
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.