Reviewer’s report

Title: Surname lists to identify South Asian and Chinese ethnicity from secondary data in Ontario, Canada: a validation study

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Reviewer: Kiumarss Nasseri

Reviewer’s report:

1. Authors have explained the weighing used by the CCHS and mentioned it in the revised manuscript, but still it is not sufficiently detailed. Primarily, one needs to know what factors are used for weighing, if ethnicity is included or not. If ethnicity is not included in the weighing scheme, then using this weighing may not be appropriate for the study. Moreover, it is not clear where and how the weighing was applied in this study.

2. Contrary to the beliefs of the authors, the actual numbers are very important. This whole validation is based on 1,400 South Asians and 1,129 Chinese, selected by surname lists of 9,950 and 1,133, respectively. I would like to see a table with numbers.

3. It seems that the authors have done two linkages: one with the RPDB that has resulted in identification of 500,807 South Asians, and 808,670 Chinese. Next, they have linked the same surname list with the CCHS database for validation and calculation of sensitivity, PPV, and other screening values. Thus, considering the sensitivity of the South Asian surname list, is it logical to assume that the 500,807 South Asians identified in the RPDB, are only 50.2 percent of all South Asians in Ontario?

7. Authors have rightly and explicitly described the limitations of their approach. The lists discussed in this study have high predictive value with poor sensitivity. Thus, while there is little question about the ethnicity of those identified by them, by no means can they be used for any kind of population based studies of these ethnic groups. As such, their utility for public health activities is severely limited. It would be relevant if the authors give an example of the utility of their surname list, and include it in the abstract.

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