Reviewer's report

Title: The use of tetanus post-exposure prophylaxis guidelines by general practitioners and emergency departments in the Netherlands: A cross-sectional questionnaire study.

Version: 1
Date: 26 March 2014
Reviewer: Michael Freitag

Reviewer's report:

The authors report a survey on the use of tetanus post-exposure prophylaxis (TPEP) guidelines in the Netherlands. The major weakness is addressed in the text: The analysis is limited to the practices and emergency departments who have agreed to participate and relies on self-information provided by them.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Several guidelines for TPEP are available in the Netherlands. The authors do not address the question which guideline is or seems to be most adequate for general practice. Are both the Dutch Health Council’s and the College of GPs’ guidelines acceptable? In the background section the authors state that the objective of the study was to “assess whether the HC recommendations regarding T-PEP are in place…” That implies that the HC recommendations are seen as gold standard for T-PEP. However, given that the College of GPs may be regarded by them as their primary reference, it is not clear which message can be taken from the percentage of GPs having adopted either the HC or the CGP recommendation. Please address this point in the paper.

2) Page 4, line 80/81: The CGP recommendation defines a smaller population to be vaccinated than the HC recommendation. Therefore the wording should not be “adheres to...” and “but it also restricts…”, but rather state “...with the exception”.

3) Page 4, lines 90/91: This is not consistent with line 80/81. This implies that the CGP guideline DO NOT conform with the HC recommendation. It is unclear whether the authors regard both guidelines as acceptable or only the HC guideline. In line 250/251 (conclusion) it is stated that both guidelines are fully consistent with the HC.

4) Page 5, line 113: This again implies that the authors only accept the HC guideline as the gold standard.

Page 8, line 179: The survey can only report what the participating GPs and EDs reported which does not necessarily mean that the guidelines were in fact adopted and in use.

Page 8, line 187: The percentage is only valid for those who participated. That means up to 62% might not even know that these guidelines exist. And even in
those participating it is likely that not all practices who claimed to have adopted
the guidelines do have adopted them.

Page 10, line 226-229: Please provide numbers for the “quick calculation”.

Page 10, line 233-234: Please provide the average cost for such a bedside test.

Page 10, line 235-237: Please provide a source for this info: At which centers this
study is taking place? Is the study protocol or preliminary data available, i.e. is it
possible to cite something related to that study?

Page 11, line 250/251: As above. Please be consistent which guideline is
regarded as acceptable and which not.

Minor Essential Revisions
5) Page 6, line 146: This should read “ninety-nine percent” (41/42) instead of
“ninety-eight percent”, right? I would prefer “99%” which has higher readability.

References: Some references with multiple authors include only one author.
Please expand these references according to the author guidelines of this
journal.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.