Reviewer's report

Title: Trends in influenza vaccination uptake among people aged over 74 years, 1997-2000: Survey of 73 General Practices

Version: 1 Date: 24 December 2003

Reviewer: Meirion Evans

Reviewer's report:

General
A useful evaluation of the impact of the introduction of universal influenza immunisation for older people in the UK. Interest is likely to be restricted to the UK and other countries considering a similar policy change.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Introduction
1. First sentence: influenza vaccine rather than the vaccine

Methods
2. data for each of 1997-2000 winter seasons
3. seven for 2000 only (not...only for 2000)
4. last line, para.1: information on housing status of individuals was available in only 42 practices
5. rephrase first sentence, para. 2
6. does the term long-term nursing care mean people living in nursing homes?

Results
7. sentence 4, para. 1: the proportional increase in vaccination uptake...
8. penultimate sentence, para. 2: Although for although, and higher uptake rather than greater uptake

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Methods:
1. should define and clarify the term subsample that is subsequently used in Results
2. should clarify the sampling frame: is this people aged 74 years in the calendar year, the winter season, or on a given date?
3. should briefly describe the models used in the analysis and how they were constructed

Results:
4. Are any data available on changes in vaccine uptake in higher risk groups viz. chronic lung disease, etc. (for whom vaccine was previously recommended )compared to lower risk groups (to whom the new vaccination policy was extended)?
   - if yes this would be informative and should be included
   - if no, there should be a comment to this effect in the Methods
Discussion:
5. There should be a comment on the implications of different samples and denominators for different years of the study and how this might influence the findings.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Declaration of competing interests:

None