Reviewer's report

Title: Avoidance Behaviors and Negative Psychological Responses in the General Population in the Initial Stage of the H1N1 Epidemic in Hong Kong

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Reviewer: Onno de Zwart

Reviewer's report:

It is an interesting article which gives a good overview of perception of H1N1 in Hong Kong and related behaviour. The manuscipt is well written and informative and helps better to understand the current epidemic. Nevertheless there are some points which need clarification

Major compulsory revision
- The results in table 4 show a contradiction which is not mentioned in the text but warrants attention. Having at least one misconception about modes of transmission is in the multivariate analysis related to avoiding visiting crowded places, going out and hospitals. At the same time having all the knowledge items correct is also related to avoiding visiting crowded places and going out. This seems contradictory both misconceptions and having correct knowledge are related to unnecessary behaviours. It is important to discuss this and give some explanation for this result.

Minor essential revision
- On page 11 in the second paragraph the authors write 'Whilst worry about the infection and severe mental distress may cause people to avoiding going out, the reverse may also be true to result in a vicious cycle.' It is not clear what is meant by the reverse. Is it not worrying and no mental distress of may be not going out resulting in more distress. This should be clarified as the vicious cycle is also mentioned in the third paragraph on this page.

Discretionary revisions
- On page 4 the alert level 'Emergency Response Level'. For readers not familiar with the Hong Kong system it would be helpful to give some background information. Is this specifically for infectious diseases of for national security?
- It may me helpful to update the number of cases of H1N1 when submitting the final version of the manuscript.

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.