Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 24 March 2010

Reviewer: James Rubin

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a very good job in revising the manuscript, which now reads much better and provides a very interesting and clear addition to the literature in this area. I have only one remaining concern that I do not think has been adequately addressed, and that relates to the overlap between this paper and that previously published by the authors:

MINOR ESSENTIAL

1) Data on most of the participants discussed in this paper have already been reported in any previous publication (Lau et al, J Insectious Diseases 2009;59:122-127). It is therefore essential that a very explicit statement is made in the current paper saying something like: "Preliminary data from the May 7 to May 9 survey have previously been reported elsewhere (ref 17)." I would suggest inserting this into the first paragraph of the Methods section. This is important so that readers are not confused by the existence of these two similar papers. Simply saying that the questionnaires used in this paper were also used in a baseline H1N1 study (p6) or that "a study" was conducted in the initial phase of the outbreak (p4) is not sufficient.

2) Elsewhere in this paper, the authors imply that the data in reference 17 is an entirely separate "study" ("a previous study showed that" p10-11) which gives the misleading impression that a different data set has produced the same results. This should be amended to read "a previous analysis of our May 7 to May 9 data showed that..."

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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