Reviewer's report

Title: Comparative age distribution of influenza morbidity and mortality during seasonal influenza epidemics and the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.

Version: 10 Date: 14 May 2010

Reviewer: James Fielding

Reviewer's report:

This paper has compared age-specific relative morbidity and mortality rates from two seasonal influenza epidemics of H1N1 and H3N2 to those of the H1N1 (2009) pandemic in the USA and France. The paper is a substantial revision on an earlier version and I am satisfied that all concerns raised in my previous review have been sufficiently addressed. I commend the authors on producing a clear, focused, concise and well-supported article in which the limitations have been sufficiently discussed.

I only suggest several minor essential revisions which are as follows:

1. Use of the word "rate" in the terms "relative illness rate" and "relative mortality rate" should be changed to "ratio" because they are used and defined in the article as ratios.

2. The "RMR" acronym in the Results subsection of the Abstract should be spelt out in full (i.e. relative mortality ratio).

3. In the Mortality data --> Pandemic influenza subsection of the Methods, I presume that 2004/2005 mortality data refers to all-cause mortality and not mortality due to influenza in 2009? In this subsection the authors also need to specify the source of data for influenza mortality in 2009 in both the USA and France.

4. The first sentence in the Ratios subsection of the Methods, particularly the phrase "in order the age distribution" requires editing/clarification.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.