Reviewer’s report

Title: Outbreak of leptospirosis among triathlon participants in Germany, 2006

Version: 1 Date: 21 November 2009

Reviewer: Sunil Karande

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The authors should mention the clinical picture and investigations done for the case of leptospirosis that was detected in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg by routine surveillance. Why was routine surveillance being carried out? Is leptospirosis endemic in this area? Please state this information in detail. Also the time duration between exposure and the clinical manifestation of this first case should be stated clearly.

2) Please state a reference to justify the 'case definition' of leptospirosis used by you by the study. The fever should be of abrupt origin which you have not included in your definition.

3) How did you get the email addresses of the participants? Please clarify.

4) Only 28% responded to the email. Why were efforts not made to contact them again by phone or by regular post? The number of participants whose sera were tested is too few for you to calculate the risk factors (namely, presence of an open wound) for developing leptospirosis. This is a significant shortcoming of your study.

5) Please state the standardized questionnaire that was sent by email and give a reference for it.

6) Please give a reference to justify your definition of serological diagnosis used by you to confirm diagnosis of leptospirosis in the study; viz. serological test results positive for antibodies against leptospires in at least two of three test assays. Only MAT or a 'quantitative' IgM-ELISA positivity can be considered as confirmatory.

7) Your study does not answer a very important question; namely the source of infection. As stated by you the absence of environmental and animal samples is a major limitation of your study which needs to be addressed by you.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the
statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.