Author's response to reviews

Title: The Spatial Epidemiology and Clinical Features of Reported Cases of La Crosse Virus Infection in West Virginia from 2003 to 2007

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To The Editor:

Please accept the revisions for the manuscript entitled “The Spatial Epidemiology and Clinical Features of Reported Cases of La Crosse Virus Infection in West Virginia from 2003 to 2007” by A.D. Haddow, D. Bixler, and A. Odoi for publication in the journal BMC Infectious diseases. We feel we have addressed the reviewers and associate editors comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Andrew Haddow
Danae Bixler
Agricola Odoi

Associate Editor's comments:

1. “I agree with the reviewers that the term "incidence risk" is confusing. In the textbook by Rothman & Greenland (Modern Epidemiology) the terms "incidence rate" and "incidence proportion" are used, the latter also termed "cumulative incidence". If incidence is described for a given time interval as proposed by the authors, the time interval used should be stated. As far as I understand the authors are referring to the cumulative incidence over the observation period of the study. This should be clarified.”

Response: Incidence risk is synonymous with cumulative incidence (See: Ian Dohoo, Wayne Martin, Henrik Stryhn. Veterinary Epidemiologic Research, 2nd Edition (2009). VER Inc, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada). Per the Associate Editor’s request we have replaced “incidence risk” with “cumulative incidence”. The time interval for the study (which the incidence risks/cumulative incidences refer to) was previously stated in the methods section and has been further stated.

2. “In the abstract on page 2 the last line of Methods should read "... identify those geographic areas ...”

Response: This has been corrected.

3. “page 4, line 74: comma after (LACV)"

Response: This has been corrected.

4. “The study identifies clusters of cases using the SatScan method. I was wondering whether these are clusters in space or also in time? Or is it not possible to identify clusters in time (=outbreaks) in these data?”
Response: The study objective was to investigate spatial patterns of infections and to identify geographical locations with significantly high risk of LACV infections. Thus this study was not intended to identify outbreaks. Further, analyses for clusters in time and space (outbreaks) were not performed for the following reasons:
1) It was not an objective of the study,
2) The data on number of cases of LACV infection was sparse and could not readily led itself for time-space analysis intended in the investigation of disease outbreaks, and
3) Data used in the study were endemic cases of the infections as there were no outbreaks these infections during the study period.

Editorial Requests
More detailed information has been provided regarding exemption of IRB review as per the University of Tennessee’s IRB guidelines. We have also uploaded further information on the University of Tennessee’s IRB guidelines and our exemption letter.