Author's response to reviews

Title: The influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in Reunion Island: knowledge, perceived risk and precautionary behaviour

Authors:

Francois Taglioni (francois.taglioni@univ-reunion.fr)
Michel Cartoux (michel.cartoux@univ-reunion.fr)
Koussay Dellagi (koussay.dellagi@ird.fr)
Cecile Dalban (cecile.dalban@yahoo.fr)
Adrian Fianu (adrian.fianu@chr-reunion.fr)
Fabrice Carrat (carrat@u707.jussieu.fr)
Francois Favier (francois.favier@chr-reunion.fr)

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Author's response to reviews:

Centre de Recherche et de Veille sur les Maladies Emergentes dans l'Océan Indien.
Sainte Clotilde the 28th of November 2011
Pr. François Taglioni
francois.taglioni@univ-reunion.fr

to Editor of BMC infectious diseases

Dear Editor ,
Please find in attachment the manuscript entitled:
The influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in Reunion Island: knowledge, perceived risk and precautionary behaviour by François Taglioni et al.
that we submit to your consideration for publication in BMC infectious diseases
Our study was conducted in Reunion Island, a subtropical overseas French Island in the southern hemisphere, in the S.W. Indian Ocean, with a population of 810.000 which peculiarity is to be of multiethnic origin (European, African, Asian).
We considered that an investigation on knowledge, perceived risk and precautionary behaviour about the influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in Reunion Island would be of interest, especially that it took place only few years after the very severe epidemic of chikungunya that struck the island in 2006.
Our study share with several studies many factors associated to precautionary
behaviours taken against H1N1 Influenza: perceived severity, perceived vulnerability and perceived self-efficacy. These results are in accordance with the Protection Motivation Theory and Health Belief Model. These factors are not always retained following a multivariate analysis since they are closely related to age, gender and standard of education, all factors which are confusing in a multivariate analysis. The socio-demographic profiles of the samples impact the model, revealing distinctive features specific to each population target. Our sample focused on the household's reference person, although not representative of Reunion's population with a high proportion of elderly people, could have played this role, highlighting the contrast in behaviour versus young adults respondents.

The specific behaviour of young adults is an important result of our study. Young adults (18-29 years) reported to be most active in terms of prevention. Apart from this result, elderly people did not appear to have a particular attitude. Compared to many others countries where a specific H1N1 influenza vaccine was available and occupied the attention of the media, public health policy-makers and politicians, in the Reunion Island, only non-medical interventions and seasonal influenza vaccine were available.

In our study, vaccination against seasonal influenza seemed related to a more general preventive attitude. It suggests that a developed approach based on seasonal vaccination before the epidemic, as an initial step towards prevention, had promoted preventive behaviour during the epidemic. It therefore seems important to further mobilize the population around a general preventive approach where there are no epidemics. These two factors: be young and be vaccinated against seasonal Influenza had not previously observed in others studies.

A tropical environment and the context associated with a previous outbreak of chikungunya are part of local conditions to be considered in the analysis. Indeed, 40% of respondents mentioned the mosquito as a potential vector of transmission of influenza A (H1N1) virus. This finding highlights the merit of adapting prevention message to special local contexts. It is important to relay national messages on prevention by messages tuned to local situations described in such studies.

We believe our results allow better understanding of the perception of the recent pandemic and will be most interesting to epidemiologists, to health authorities and health managers in charge of future influenza epidemics and pandemics.

We hope that you will consider this manuscript suitable for publication in BMC infectious diseases.
Please note that all coauthors have approved the version submitted herewith; this manuscript has not been previously and is not presently submitted for publication elsewhere.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Best regards

Prof. François Taglioni

CRVOI

Reunion Island

Sainte Clotilde the 22th of December 2011

Pr. François Taglioni
francois.taglioni@univ-reunion.fr

to Editor of BMC infectious diseases

Dear Editor,

I have sent on 22th of december 2011 a new version of the manuscript entitled: The influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in Reunion Island: knowledge, perceived risk and precautionary behaviour by François Taglioni et al.

This new version contain the changes requested (consent statement and ethics statement) on 9th Decembre 2011.

Please note that all coauthors have approved the new version submitted herewith.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Best regards

Prof. François Taglioni

CRVOI

Reunion Island