Reviewer's report

Title: Identification of Congenital Rubella Syndrome in Sudan

Version: 2 Date: 18 April 2014

Reviewer: Jon Kim Andrus

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written, concise paper of important findings on the occurrence of congenital rubella syndrome in Sudan. I believe the findings add to the scientific body of evidence. However, the conclusion is wrong and may divert what is actually needed for a public health response.

Major compulsory revisions:

1) The conclusion advocates for strengthening surveillance of CRS. CRS is totally preventable by excellent vaccines. CRS signals rubella virus transmission which can be interrupted using the available safe and effective vaccines. Interruption of rubella virus transmission would prevent future cases of CRS. This well-documented in the experience of the WHO Region of the Americas.

2) The authors do not acknowledge successful rubella and congenital rubella syndrome elimination efforts in other parts of the world. CRS surveillance was not a critical factor. Surveillance of rash and fever is much more important in eliminating measles and rubella virus transmission. The authors do not acknowledge the role of rash and fever surveillance. A reference to consider is: Andrus JK, de Quadros CA, Castillo-Solorzano C, Roses Periago M, Henderson DA. Measles and rubella eradication in the Americas. Vaccine 2011:29S;D91-D96.

3) Focusing solely on strengthening of CRS surveillance diverts scarce resources when rubella and measles containing vaccine introduction should be the priority coupled with a focus on rash and fever surveillance. Sentinel site surveillance of CRS when affordable can add value, but is not a central component of the public health intervention. A suggested reference would be: Andrus JK, de Quadros CA. Perspectives on the role of surveillance in eliminating rubella and congenital rubella syndrome from the Americas. Expert Rev Vaccines 2013;12(9):989-93.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.