Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessment of routine surveillance data as a tool to investigate measles outbreaks in Mozambique

Version: 3 Date: 12 October 2005

Reviewer: Julie Cliff

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. 3.2.2. Age groups are different in the text and Table.
2. 3.3. Highest attack rates were in non-vaccinated 9-23 months.
3. 3.3. Reference should be to Table 3, not Table 1.
4. Table 1. Why 17/17 and 9/9?
5. Table 2. Symbol for equal or greater on 15 years.
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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Discussion opening paragraph. The format of the register books and BES is not at the root of the problem of under-notification of cases, Maputo City is probably a special case regarding under-notification, and even there the BES system did work to signal the epidemic. So the generalizations regarding under-notification of cases remain problematic.

2. 4.1.3. In speaking of "the register book", the authors do not distinguish between outpatient and inpatient register books. The outpatient book is unlikely to contain information on deaths, as sick patients are referred. The inpatient book does not need to contain information on hospitalization, as patients are already in hospital. Deaths in hospital were recorded in the register; the problem appears not to be in the format, but in failing to record the information in the BES.

3. 4.1.3. Para on high mortality in Maputo City due to overcrowding could go after Maputo City or to the end of the section.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.