Reviewer's report

Title: Trends of Hepatitis A Hospitalization and Risk Factors in Quebec, Canada, Between 1990 and 2003

Version: 3 Date: 18 December 2006

Reviewer: Beth P. Bell

Reviewer's report:

General

In general this version of the manuscript is much improved both in terms of validity and clarity.

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

There are two issues that I think still need to be addressed, already covered in my original comments.

1) The authors have removed some of the comparisons of hospitalization rates between 1990-1997 and 1998-2003, and have toned down the interpretation, as I had suggested. However, many of these comparisons have been retained in the results, and the difference in overall rates was tested with a p-value. They also continue to stratify the data into these two time periods in table 2, the risk factor analysis. Please explicitly use the terms "outbreak period" and "non-outbreak" period if these comparisons are to be retained. The two periods can be defined as such in the methods, if the authors prefer. I think table 2 can be deleted - the overall proportions can be reported in the text, as well as the larger proportion of MSM cases during the outbreak period. The table does not provide any additional information.

2) In their response to my comments, the authors say that they have removed the incidence data from the results. However, figure 2, which shows incidence and hospitalization rates overall and by age group, has been retained, so I don't think the results have indeed been deleted from the manuscript, although they appear to have been deleted from the text of the results. Remaining reference to figure 2 in the results relates to overall hospitalization rates by year. The authors should redo figure 2 so that it only shows overall hospitalization rates by year. I can't tell if hospitalization rates by age group would be of any interest (although I doubt it), since, as I mentioned previously, you can't really see the trend in hospitalization rates when placed on the same axis as incidence rates (especially with the same scale for all age groups).

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.