Reviewer’s report

Title: Private doctors’ practices, knowledge, and attitude regarding reporting of communicable diseases: A national survey in Taiwan

Version: 1 Date: 9 August 2008

Reviewer: David Durrheim

Reviewer’s report:

The question posed by the authors is defined and appropriate methods were used to explore this question. The research methods are well described and this is adequately reflected in the title and abstract. The abstract conclusion is not supported by the key results reported in the abstract and this should be revised.

A appropriate comprehensive review of relevant global literature on the research topic was conducted and adequately referenced.

There are couple of specific issues related to the sampling strategy and these are raised below. The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

Although the discussion and conclusions are supported by the data presented, there is a need for the discussion to trimmed as described. The potential limitations of the self-selecting sample should be described.

Opportunities for improving the writing style have been identified.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Abstract: Conclusion: refers to doctors’ attitudes but in the Results doctors’ knowledge and perceptions are presented not responses to the attitude questions!.

2. Methods - need to clarify the specific rule used to assign 50 or 100 clinics to each town.

3. It is also not clear what prior values were given to key sample size characteristics that lead to the sample size used.

4. The response rate is a practice response rate with a potentially important bias; first doctor who volunteered was selected as respondent. It is likely that volunteering doctors’ notification practices may be systematically different to non-volunteering doctors. This deserves discussion.

5. It would be helpful in addressing this concern to compare the descriptive characteristics of the participants and all private doctors in Taiwan to demonstrate similarity or difference. Otherwise the level of demographic description provided adds little value to the study or its interpretation.
6. Discussion - this is too lengthy and could be easily shortened to provide greater focus on the actual findings and necessary response to these. Unfortunately statistically significant differences and non-significant differences are treated equally in the discussion. This is inappropriate and the focus should really be on significant differences between reporting and non-reporting doctors.

7. Table 1. Need titles for columns referring to reporting and non-reporting doctors

- Minor Essential Revisions

8. Running head title and abbreviated title: should mention that participants were Taiwanese doctors.

9. Abstract: Background "..attitude to.".rather than.".... attitude regarding...." "Reporting and non-reporting doctors" not "reporters"

10. Methods - "reported having notified" rather than "experience of notifying"

11. Similar changes need to made in main body of paper.

12. Results: not an appropriate place to mention other countries’ experience

Main body of paper:

13. Data analysis - "single variable frequency distribution" is a better way of describing the descriptive statistics

14. "A p values" needs to be corrected

15. How many doctors participated in the pilot and what changes resulted from piloting.

16. Results - "reported for less than twice" needs correction "reported once" and other similar English language corrections

17. Premature to state that improving reporting structure would "increase effectiveness"

18. The reference to reporting "in" reporters throughout the paper should be changed to "amongst"

19. Table 2: alignment of e) questions

20. Disconnection between c) and d) responses. Clearly most people used the same method for all their reports because the total of methods used provided does not equal to the total of all notifications reported by participants (over 800 notifications in total). This should be noted in the text in reference to this table.
21. Reasons 1 and 9 are the same and should be combined.

22. Table 3: "items of communicable diseases" should rather be "selected notifiable communicable diseases".

23. There are a number of language and alignment issues in Tables 4 & 5 that need to be corrected. In addition it is preferable to refer to a "preferred government agency" rather than a "favourite".

**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 that I have no competing interests