Reviewer's report

Title: The Epidemiology of Pertussis in Germany: Past and Present

Version: 2 Date: 2 December 2008

Reviewer: Pamela Rendi-Wagner

Reviewer's report:

I have read with great interest the present article, presenting an extensive summary about the epidemiological trend of pertussis disease in Germany since 1947. This is done by Hellenbrand and colleagues by merging a wide range of diverse sources of surveillance data. The presentation of the broad magnitude of data analyzed and discussed, however, leaves the reader confused at times. Comparing data of various time periods, hence, varying pertussis vaccination policies, including former East-, West Germany, and reunited Germany is very interesting, but at present with the data presented in the text and figures, information is not well structured.

However, the authors are covering a highly interesting topic, which is of particular public health interest since it may guide future pertussis vaccination policies also in other countries.

The present manuscript is well written, though lengthy. Clearer structuring and more concise description of data would definitely help to get the message through. Publication is highly recommended.

Minor specific comments below:

Abstract: Overall, the abstract is well written. In the first sentence, authors should add West Germany, since also FWG data are described in the manuscript.

Methods: page 3, para 5: The authors should specify the abbreviation WH. Do they mean WHO?

Results: An additional table should be provided presenting an overview about the different routine vaccination schedules in the various time periods and regions, what vaccines are routinely used (acellular or whole cell), and whether the vaccines are provided to all children. This would assist in the interpretation of data presented.

Discussion: The authors may also mention the recommendations by the Global Pertussis Initiative.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**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.