Reviewer's report

Title: Quarantine for pandemic influenza control at borders in small island nations

Version: 2 Date: 19 January 2009

Reviewer: Ying-Hen Hsieh

Reviewer's report:

I am generally happy with the authors’ revision in response to my comments, just some more discretionary remarks.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions
None

Discretionary Revisions

1. Although infection event is not observable, there is ample literature on back-projecting infection times from the onset times (e.g., Yip et al. ICHE 2007 for SARS). Hence it is not entirely impractical, albeit extremely difficult and perhaps more suitable as future projects.

2. The sensitivity analysis on generation times, and the uncertainty it demonstrates, further highlights the need for high-quality epidemiologic data, which is unfortunately often left wanting during disease outbreaks.

3. My point is exactly that the effectiveness of quarantine should depend on p, contrary to the authors’ assumption. Perhaps the authors are right in saying that smaller p offers larger ripple benefits of quarantine, but that is under the assumption that all incoming infected individuals experience infection at t=0. If there is significant number of asymptomatic arriving infective individuals (which the authors assume there is none), then things might be quite different. I don’t know the answer, but again, this might be an important topic for future studies since the modeling results would help to elucidate the global issue of how one affected country deals with an outbreak could affect other countries, in particular island countries with large volume of international travel.

4. As a side remark, island countries like New Zealand or Singapore (or some island countries in Europe) are neither poor nor developing, in my opinion.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

None