Author's response to reviews

Title: University life and pandemic influenza: Attitudes and intended behaviour of staff and students towards pandemic (H1N1) 2009

Authors:

Debbie Van (z3207293@student.unsw.edu.au)
Mary-Louise McLaws (m.mclaws@unsw.edu.au)
Jacinta Crimmins (j.crimmins@unsw.edu.au)
C.Raina MacIntyre (r.macintyre@unsw.edu.au)
Holly Seale (h.seale@unsw.edu.au)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
26 February 2010

Editor in Chief
BMC Public Health

Dear Editor in Chief

Re: University life and pandemic influenza: Attitudes and intended behaviour of staff and students towards pandemic (H1N1) 2009

Authors: Debbie Van, Mary-Louise McLaws, Jacinta Crimmins, C. Raina MacIntyre, Holly Seale

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review our manuscript for publication in your journal. The changes to the manuscript have been reviewed and approved by all the authors. There are no conflicts of interest surrounding its publication. It has not been published in any other journals, nor is it being considered for publication anywhere else. My response to the reviewer’s comments is attached below.

Thank you for this opportunity

Dr Holly Seale
School of Public Health & Community Medicine
Level 3, Samuels Building
Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales
Sydney, 2052, Australia
Telephone: +61 (2) 9385 3129 Fax: +61 (2) 9313 6185
Email: h.seale@unsw.edu.au
Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author

Reviewer One

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. On page 5 under the Lifestyle and Specific Behavioural Changes heading add the word “products” after the words “hand hygiene”. In the same paragraph, please add the word “change” after the words “recommended behaviour”.  
Response: As per the reviewer’s suggestion, the changes have been made.

2. On page 6, in the second paragraph, the last word of the 4th line seems to be an error.  
Response: The word has been replaced.

3. On page 6, in the third paragraph, add the word “among” after the phrase “online teaching methods”.  
Response: The word has been added.

4. On page 6, in the third paragraph, delete the word “your” in the second last line.  
Response: We have deleted the word as per the reviewer’s request.

5. On page 7, in the first paragraph, add the word “change” after “specific behaviour”.  
Response: This has been updated as per the reviewer’s comment.

6. On page 7, in the second paragraph, you state that respondents expressed a willingness to receive influenza vaccine if “requested by authorities”. Please explain what the definition of this was for the survey. For example, some people might believe that general public health messaging around vaccine is the equivalent of a request from authorities to be vaccinated. Or is it possible that people took this to mean something different (perhaps mandatory vaccine)? This may be a limitation of the survey as it seems that without further elaboration there may have been significant heterogeneity in terms of how people interpreted the question.  
Response: We did not define “requested by authorities” in the survey and hence it was open to interpretation by the respondents. We have included this in the limitations.

7. On page 7, in the fourth paragraph, delete the word “both” from the 7th line.  
Response: The sentence has been revised.

8. The spacing of reference 5 is different than the other references.  
Response: We have formatted the references.

9. In table 2, I would specify that the data presented for the table represent the proportion of individuals who responded in the affirmative.  
Response: Table 2 has been updated to represent the proportion of individuals who responded in the affirmative.
Discretionary Revisions:
1. I would be very interested in seeing a short discussion regarding the actual vaccine uptake numbers in the age groups included in the survey once vaccine was available in Australia (since over 57% indicated that they would be very willing to accept vaccine).
Response: Information on the national acceptance of the H1N1 vaccine has been added to the discussion (page 7)

Reviewer Two

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. The background needs to be updated (all the numbers). It may be useful to add the date when referring to “to date”.
Response: All statistics have been updated according to the most recent WHO and Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing surveillance reports. The date of the latter is included.

2. Page 3, paragraph 3: The last sentence is redundant by now.
Response: We have removed this sentence.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. I would have liked to see more analyses on how attitudes and intended behaviour changes over time, such as presented in figures 1 and 2. This is important information when predicting the possible impact of mitigation strategies.
Response: We had completed substantial analysis on how responses change over time; however some findings were not significant and hence not included. This may be attributed to the low response rate we received towards the end of the study period and has been added to the limitations.

2. The discussion is a little short on policy implications of the findings
Response: Further information has been added to page 6

Editorial requests

(1) Provide context information in the background section of your abstract, in addition to the aims of your study.
Response: This section has been updated to include contextual information on pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and its relevance to Universities and similar institutions.

(2) Provide the survey administered in your study as an additional file to your submission.
Response: These are the questions which were included in the survey
Please indicate your role at the University?
☐ Academic staff member  ☐ General staff member  ☐ Student

Have you heard about the "swine flu" situation in Australia?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

How does the "swine flu" situation in Australia make you feel? (Please tick one box)
☐ Extremely disinterested/not anxious
☐ Mildly disinterested/not anxious
☐ Not anxious
☐ Neither
☐ Anxious
☐ Mildly anxious
☐ Extremely anxious

Please tick the box that best indicates your response to the following

I am likely to catch “swine flu”

Extremely Unlikely Neither Likely Extremely

If I caught “swine flu”, my health would be

Extremely Affected Moderately Affected Somewhat Affected Neither Unaffected Moderately Unaffected Extremely Unaffected

I think the current “swine flu” situation is serious

Extremely Agree Moderately Agree Agree Neither Disagree Moderately Disagree Extremely Disagree

Have you made changes to the way you live your life because of the current “swine flu situation”?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

Have you undertaken any of the following because of “swine flu”? (Tick all that apply)
☐ Bought hygiene products- face masks, hand wash to protect me from swine flu
☐ Got a flu shot to help protect me from swine flu
☐ Cancelled plans to meet friends, other students, family members
☐ Avoided busy public places e.g. shopping areas, cinemas, restaurants
☐ Cancelled/postponed travel plans- interstate or international
☐ Switched to listening to lecturers/participating in tutorials online
☐ Organised to record lectures/tutorials
☐ Stopped using public transport
☐ Stocked up on food and/or other necessities
☐ I haven’t changed any of my behaviour/plans
For each of the following sentences, please tick the appropriate box

“I would come into university if…..”

1. I had symptoms consistent with flu e.g. fever and a cough/runny nose
2. I had symptoms consistent with flu and I had an exam/assessment due or work deadline
3. I was well but knew that a fellow student or staff member had contracted the flu.
4. A family member or close contact had flu-like symptoms e.g. fever and a cough/runny nose
5. I was well but I knew that the number of cases of swine flu had increased in Australia

In case of an influenza pandemic, authorities might request cooperation from the public in a number of ways. Please indicate how willing would you be to... (Please tick one box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all willing</th>
<th>A little willing</th>
<th>Moderately willing</th>
<th>Very willing</th>
<th>Extremely willing</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive a “swine flu” vaccine</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolate yourself from others if you caught swine flu</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wear a mask while in public if you had flu-like symptoms</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist quarantined neighbours/friends with food supplies etc</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate by staying away and taking lecturers/tutorials via the internet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you attend a lecture or work meeting and are sitting next to or near someone who is coughing or sneezing, would you

☐ Not be worried
☐ Feel worried but stay where you are
☐ Feel worried and move to another seat
☐ Leave the area
☐ Ask the person to leave.
☐ Other, please elaborate________________________________________

Did you receive the influenza vaccination in.........? (Tick one response for each year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your sex?  ☐ Male  ☐ Female

What is your age group?  ☐ 18-24 years  ☐ 25-34 years  ☐ 35-44 years  ☐ 45-54 years  ☐ 55-64 years  ☐ 65+ years
Please describe your home/living arrangements? (Please tick one box)

- □ Live Alone
- □ Live with parents
- □ Live with partner/spouse
- □ Live on campus
- □ Live in shared accommodation off campus
- □ Live with partner/spouse and children
- □ Other (specify) ________________________________

How many people in household ________________________________

Country of birth ________________________________

Time spent in Australia □ 2 years or less □ 3 to 5 year’s □ 6 to10 year’s □ greater than 10 years

Are you employed? □ No □ Full time □ Casual □ Part-time

Please indicate your household annual income? □ <$30,000 □ $31,000- $50,000 □ $51,000-$80,000 □ >$81,000