Reviewer’s report

Title: Perception of Epidemic Risk in the French General Population: A Cross-sectional study in the Rhone-Alpes Region

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Reviewer: Arja R R Aro

Reviewer’s report:

The study deals with a relatively important theme of risk perception related to epidemics. However, the manuscript raises several concerns.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

1. First, the title refers to epidemic risk but the results (in the abstract, in the results and in the discussion section) list with similar importance (health) problems such as cancer, unemployment etc. It looks that actually the aim has been to study worries in general in the population. Either the manuscript should be framed as a study about worries in population or be selective in presenting the epidemic risks as the major issues – and others at maximum as reference points.

2. Second, the manuscript ignores the recent, fast growing literature on the issue especially in Europe on the same topic. Recently e.g. a special issue of International Journal of Behavioral Medicine with several empirical papers and a review on risk perception was published. Also e.g. Emerging Infectious Diseases journal has published relevant recent results on the theme. However, the manuscript refers to several Asian and also Canadian publications from earlier years.

3. The English language requires thorough checking. I am not sure if the rather incoherent use of terms (e.g. ‘individual perception of epidemics arises from several determinants such as beliefs and attitudes’) is a problem related to the language or otherwise to the loose use of terms. Further, the term ‘socio-professional categories’ is not commonly used.

4. Some basic concepts such as ‘knowledge of diseases’, ‘principal fears’ etc would require more explicit definition on how they were measured. Was knowledge level self-evaluated or calculated from the replies to knowledge items? It looks that those who (self) indicated having knowledge were inquire further e.g. about the transmission routes.

5. The results: I do not think it is necessary to present the table comparing the background characteristics of the sample and those of the population in a table. Further the tables e.g. Table 3 does not show the number of subjects the percentages have been calculated from. This even when the percentages probably have been calculated for a subset of the subjects (those expressing knowledge).

6. The discussion states that people with better knowledge had less anxiety-
however this association cannot be found in the results section. Further, there are relatively unrelated claims in the discussion claiming e.g. that ‘lack of concern and indifference could (also) create situation of general panic and interfere with effective control measures...’ this does not come from the study results and the authors do not provide any reference to other publications either. The inferences made are not really evidence-based: e.g. that compliance with advice reflecting anxiety or psychological distress. There are also other unfounded expressions in the discussion section.

7. Finally, the conclusion is not based on the results of the study.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.