Reviewer's report

Title: Coverage of celebrity cancer and cancer education

Version: 1 Date: 26 March 2010

Reviewer: Chiara de Waure

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1) In the title Authors stated to be interested in evaluating if Goody’s experience was a missing opportunity for promoting health in the highest risk groups. Anyway, Authors did not focus only on them in the paper and I do not believe that there is a need for discussing only high risk groups.

2) Among the objectives of the paper, as reported also in the abstract, there is the comparison with the newspapers coverage of the introduction of human papilloma virus vaccination. According to me, Authors should better explain the rationale of this objective. It is expected that mobilising information for promoting the prevention of cervical cancer is much covered in newspapers which deal with vaccination than to those about Goody’s illness. News about HPV vaccination was intended to spread other kind of information, more accurate and scientific, respect to those about Goody. The comparison could be thus misleading; moreover, in my opinion, it is not an added value.

3) I am not completely agree with the Authors when They declared (at the end of the introduction) to evaluating the role of newspaper contents in raising public awareness to encourage women to adopt risk-reducing behaviors. Authors did not assess the impact of newspapers contents but only described them without evaluating the improvements occurred after the publication of newspapers. Only about screening something is stated in the discussion but a more detailed evaluation of changes in attitudes and behaviors of women should be carried out to appraise the real impact.

4) Were the 527 articles all the papers retrieved from the search or were they the results of the selection process among a higher number of articles?

5) I believe that among the broad thematic categories assessed in the articles coverage, further important sections are missing: the prevention of HPV (as also reported by Anhang et al. in 2004 on Cancer) and the treatment and prognosis of cervical cancer. In particular, in the perspective of promoting healthy behaviors the assessment of the coverage of prevention of sexually transmitted diseases should be very interesting.

6) What about the accordance between the two researchers in the assessment of articles contents and in coding them? Was a statistical test applied to verify the accordance?
7) How was conducted the statistical analysis? In Table 2, p values are reported and Authors should describe statistical methods in details.

8) In my opinion, table 2 is confusing. Authors stated to report column % but it seems that row percentages were reported. Moreover the heading of the Table was “key themes discussion in articles by newspaper genre”: thus the last column could be removed or the title of the table should be changed. The computation of p-value is not clear: what newspaper genre was compared to? Were themes considered one by one?

9) The discussion could be implemented. First of all, in my opinion, the different topics discussed are not well linked together. The statement about the balance between risk for disease and for vaccine adverse events is, for example, not well integrated in the text. Authors described the Goody Effect reporting uptake rate and coverage of screening thus evaluating the potential impact of Goody’s coverage by newspapers. Anyway this part should be described in results and Authors should specify the meaning of uptake rate and coverage and give details about sources and methods to evaluate data. This if the aim of the Authors was to establish the impact of articles about Goody’s illness. Moreover, it could be observed that the trend in diffusion and adhesion to organised screening programmes and coverage of cervical screening are demonstrated to being increased in the years in some countries, such as Italy.

10) The limits of the study should be described in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions

11) The abstract could be better organised: in particular the section of findings could be improved and enriched with data.

12) In the introduction Authors reported the negative effect of Kylie Minogue’s cancer and described an increased screening and a reduction, in the months immediately following the diagnosis, of the volume of operations. Anyway the time in which the 20% increased screening occurred was not described thus being not possible to clearly interpret data.

13) In the table 1, relative frequencies for articles retrieved in each newspaper could be added.

14) The formatting of the table 2 should be checked.

15) Interventions and initiatives to promote the educational role of mass media could be hypothesised in the discussion.

16) The punctuation should be revised: missing full stop at the end of methods in the abstract; missing space before the bracket at page 3, line 10; missing space and displaced full stop at page 3, line 18 and 19, and at page 8 line 2.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests