Author's response to reviews

Title: A cross-sectional survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding seasonal influenza vaccination among European travellers to resource-limited destinations

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A cross-sectional survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding seasonal influenza vaccination among international travellers

Response to Reviewers' Comments

Reviewer's Comment 1609998644405489: Robert M West
Reviewer's Comment 1994511527402630: Nicola Principi
Reviewer's Comment 1923717365393748: Gerrit van Essen

Reviewer's report:

1. Reviewer comment

Although the authors have put things in place, the study is still of limited value. Adding another survey does not improve that. The results of this study only cover visitors of this specific travel clinic in Zurich. The fact that the results are comparable with other surveys in the same clinic do not alter this limitation.

Response

We are able to compare our spectrum of travellers to the WTO travel statistics for Switzerland and to European airport studies. From there, we know that travellers to North Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean region are underrepresented as we have highlighted in the DISCUSSION section.

In addition, we have specified the manuscript title to clearly state that only travellers to resource-limited destinations were included.

2. Reviewer comment

Moreover, adding another survey makes it more complicated: the rationale for
being vaccinated or not might have changed after the pandemic. The significant change in seasonal vaccination coverage is exemplaric. Adding both populations is not sound.

With all these limitations it is a wonder that the well known variables still come up: age and previous vaccination. The conclusion of the study could be that age and previous vaccination are the best predictors in any population.

Response

We agree with the reviewer, that the swine flu pandemic might have changed the perception and attitude towards seasonal influenza vaccination. The expected higher seasonal influenza vaccination coverage could be observed as depicted in Table 1. There was a small but statistically significant increase.

Inherently, travellers are known to be healthier than the general population. Travel as potential risk factor for influenza is not well known. Therefore, two conclusions might be drawn: first, predictors for travellers do not significantly differ from that of the general population which is also in agreement with the European Vaccine Manufacturer study. Second, travellers have to be informed by all possible sources. Usually, they do not belong to a traditional at-risk group and therefore, they are not routinely contacted e.g. by their family physicians. This includes a new aspect to be aware of.

3. Some small remarks:
- in the abstract the methods section does not give the methods (log regression) statistical methods (Chi-square test, multiple logistic regression analyses) were included in the methods section of the abstract

- the conclusion is not based on the results: risk perception etc was very poor among visitors of the Zurich travel clinic (not among international travellers)

We have specified that international travellers included those to resource-limited destination, as it was also described above and in the DISCUSSION section of the manuscript.

- and by the way: why was it poor? compared with what?

The influenza vaccination coverage was poor when compared to the traditional at-risk groups (e.g. the elderly and those with selected chronic medical conditions).

- in the results the travel characteristics are not very informative: they could be different a month later, depending on the season

With the travel destination given for a specific season we would be able to assess potential region-specific gaps or risks as e.g. the flu epidemic originating in Latin America in 2009. In addition, it shows that we have covered travellers from all continents having resource-limited destinations.
- the subset of business travellers (n=92) is too small to draw conclusions
With our sample of business travellers we were able to test on significance whether there is a difference in the flu vaccination coverage between e.g. tourists and business travellers. We agree that an in-depth analysis of business travellers was not possible.