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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Author's response to reviews: see over
A cross-sectional survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding seasonal influenza vaccination among international travellers

Ms No. 4127179873200373

Dear Editor

Thank you and the reviewers for their useful comments. As requested, we have revised our manuscript according to the comments of Gerrit van Essen. We have addressed the comments of Gerrit van Essen point-by-point in the attached and separate ‘Response to reviewers’ – file.

Overall, the following main aspects were included:

- The title of the manuscript was changed to describe more precisely the study population: A cross-sectional survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding seasonal influenza vaccination among European travellers to resource-limited destinations
- The ABSTRACT was amended as requested.
- Within the DISCUSSION section the study limitations were more precisely formulated.

We thank the reviewers for their contributions to improve the manuscript and we have implemented all points. With interest we are looking forward to your response.

On behalf of all authors,

Yours sincerely,

Margot Mutsch
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.