Reviewer's report

Title: Internet-based surveillance of Influenza-like-illness in the UK during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic

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Reviewer: Jouke van der Zee

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general comment; the authors reacted, generally spoken, adequately to my comments. They countered my comments on not using NHSDirect information adequately by explaining that NHSDirect couldn't cope with the flu pandemic and was replaced by a special service, whose data were used in the paper instead (I hadn't realized that).

However, I am still not convinced of the relevance of internet-based flu surveillance. Firstly because the participation bias is not just a question of missing some parts of the population (overrepresentation of London and underrepresentation of the Midlands and the northern parts of England, but missing specifically the major targets groups for flu surveillance that is: young children and the frail elderly. The discrepancy between the survey participants and the population is such that weighing methods will not do; further research and analysis into the representativeness of exactly this group (what are the characteristics of the responders from this generally non-responding groups) is needed. This topic should be addressed less superficially in the discussion.

The same goes for the validity aspects of the internet surveillance data. The authors touch the subject by recommending self-administered swabs. That is quite a measure with a lot of possible consequences like the ethical question of how to deal with positive swabs.

Finally I'd like the authors to explain in more detail which cases can be detected by internet surveys that do escape attention by traditional (i.e. GP-based data), certainly in a country where GP-data can be related immediately to population denominators.

The authors' remark that internet-based surveys can form an addition to the traditional ways of data collection are, in my opinion, not very convincing.

I suggest to rewrite the discussion section of the paper in a way that is less biased towards the assumption internet-based flu surveillance is basically a good idea by eg emphasizing the real gains in terms of better or more timely insight in the type and course of a dangerous pandemic.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

no competing interests

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