Author's response to reviews

Title: Perceptions of and Willingness to Engage in Public Health Precautions to Prevent 2009 H1N1 Influenza Transmission

Authors:

Marc T Kiviniemi (mtk8@buffalo.edu)
Pavani K Ram (pkram@buffalo.edu)
Lynn T Kozlowski (lk22@buffalo.edu)
Kaitlin M Smith (kaitlins@buffalo.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Dr. Cowling:

Thank you for your and the reviewers’ careful attention and favorable response to our manuscript submission “Perceptions of and Willingness to Engage in Public Health Precautions to Prevent 2009 H1N1 Influenza Transmission” (mss 1076525666481955). My coauthors and I very much appreciate the time and attention you and the reviewers gave to the manuscript. We have now completed revisions to address the points you and the reviewers made concerning the original submission and believe that the revisions have resulted in a stronger manuscript.

Attached to this letter is a detailed description of the changes made to the manuscript; as requested in your editorial letter, changes made are also highlighted in yellow in the submitted revision. With only one exception (see Reviewer 1, point 5 below) we made all of the changes suggested by the reviewer and in your editorial letter.

Thank you again for considering our paper. As indicated in our previous cover letter, the paper has not been published previously, and is not currently under review at any other journal. There are no conflicts of interest to report. The work was conducted in compliance with the American Public Health Association’s ethics guidelines.

Sincerely,

Marc T. Kiviniemi, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Community Health and Health Behavior

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**Editorial Requests**

1) The editor requested that we comment on the difference between the proportion willing to engage in behavior and surveillance data on actual uptake of vaccination. We added a discussion of this point in the limitations section (p. 15).

2) A background section was added to the abstract (p. 2).

3) All author emails are now included on the cover page (p. 1).

4) A statement about IRB approval is included in the methods section (p. 5).

5) A copy of the questionnaire is included as a supplemental file.
Referee 1 (Eastwood)

1) The reviewer asked for additional detail concerning selection criteria for the study. This information has been added to the methods section (p. 5).

2) The reviewer asked for details about how the demographic characteristics presented in Table 1 differ from those of the background population. All analyses conducted for the paper were conducted using weighted analysis techniques using calculated sampling weights so that the results represent the underlying population. We clarified this point in the text where the demographics are discussed (p. 5), added a note to Table 1 addressing the use of population weighted analyses, and adjusted the title of the table accordingly (p. 23).

3) The reviewer requested additional detail concerning the response rate and possible selection biases. That information has been added to the methods section (p. 5).

4) The reviewer made several suggestions for typographical and rewording edits in the text. Each of these has been addressed.

5) The reviewer made several suggestions regarding tables. The following changes were made:

   - Table 4: changed formatting to better highlight significant results; added a note to indicate that analyses used sampling weights (now Tables 5 & 6; pp. 28-30)

   - Table 3: changed reporting to include confidence intervals for comparison across items. The proportion comparisons which led to the superscript confusion are now reported only in text, not in the table (now Table 4, p. 27).

   - Table 2: we considered the reviewer’s suggestion to remove the table and report the results in text. Given that the interpretation of recommendations, as reflected by the open-ended responses, is a key result from the study we elected to leave the table in the manuscript for ease of finding and reviewing these results.

Referee 2 (Rubin)

1) The reviewer commented about a potential limitation of the efficacy and willingness questions used in the survey – that one might consider prevention of transmission of H1N1 FROM another person and transmission TO another person differently. As the reviewer points out, this is not an issue that can be addressed in our dataset. We added a comment to the limitations section suggesting examination of the distinction as a point for future research (p. 14).
2) The reviewer requested additional information about how many preventive actions participants generated in response to the open-ended prompt. This information has been added to the results section (p. 9).

3) The reviewer commented on our statement that participants had varying interpretations of the recommendations, specifically the recommendation to avoid sick people. The reviewer commented that many of the responses made by participants were potentially valid behaviors to prevent disease transmission. Our intention is not to suggest that the interpretations are, by and large, incorrect. Our key point is that a broad recommendation is translated into specific behavioral actions by different people. We have edited the paragraph in the discussion section to better communicate this point (p. 11).

4) The reviewer suggested including perceived efficacy as a factor related to acceptability of actions in the discussion. We have added a sentence discussing the importance of efficacy (p. 13-14).

5) The reviewer commented that our use of the term “absolute risk” might be confusing given that we also use the term “risk” to refer to a broader category of constructs. We have changed the construct label to “likelihood” in both the methods and results sections.

6) The reviewer requested clarification of the response options for willingness and efficacy questions. This has been added to the measures description in the methods section (p. 7).

7) The reviewer requested that methods for comparing proportions be mentioned in the analysis section. This description was added (p. 8).

8) The reviewer suggested splitting table 2 into two separate tables. That change has been made and references to table numbers in the text have been updated accordingly.

9) The reviewer suggested citations for other examinations of H1N1 precautions. Those citations have been added to the introduction (p. 4).

10) The reviewer noted two wording issues in the limitations section. These issues have been corrected.

**Referee 3 (Schwarzinger)**

1) The reviewer commented on the differences between the reported willingness to engage in vaccination behavior and surveillance reports of actual uptake. We have added discussion of these differences to the limitations section (p. 15).

2) The reviewer commented that categorical yes/no responses, rather than multiple response Likert-type scales, were used to assess efficacy and willingness and suggested that the response scale might bias responses. The willingness responses for vaccination are consistent with those of another study assessing vaccination willingness using a 4-point, Likert-type response scale suggested by the reviewer. This point is now addressed in the discussion section (p. 15).
3) The reviewer expressed concern that univariate rather than multivariate analyses were used for the risk/efficacy findings. We reran the analyses using multivariate logistic regression and updated the table to reflect the multivariate results. In line with reviewer 2’s comment about complex tables, we elected to split the predictors results into two tables, one reporting demographics and one reporting risk/efficacy. Table numbers and references to the tables in text were updated accordingly (Tables 5 & 6, pp. 28-30).