Reviewer’s report

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

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 13 December 2010

**Reviewer:** Keith Eastwood

**Reviewer’s report:**

Perceptions and willingness to engage in public health precautions to prevent 2009 H1N1 influenza transmission

Kiviniemi et al

The manuscript is well written and logically presented. It provides some valuable information on public perceptions and willingness to comply with public health containment measures and is of particular interest because the survey explores how respondents interpreted recommendations, an area that has seen little attention.

In my opinion, there are three principal areas that could improve the report:

**Minor Essential Revisions**

1. In the methods section it would be appropriate to provide more detail on who was accepted into the study. Considering the cosmopolitan nature of the NY population, how did the interviewers manage with non-English speaking respondents? In what languages was the survey available? Who was excluded from the study? Was any attempt made to ensure state-wide representation (if not, why was this not considered necessary)?

2. While the demographics of the sample are recorded in Table 1, it would be appropriate to include a column showing how this compares with the background population and any statistically significant differences should be mentioned and explained. The analysis should then be conducted by weighting back to the population norm and interpreted.

3. The participation rate of 24% warrants comment. What limitations would the authors make regarding extrapolation to the background population? It would be appropriate to comment on the remaining 76% regarding future engagement and likely compliance. Is there any way of commenting on the social/demographic status of the non-responder group?

**General comments:**

**Discretionary Revisions**
There are some minor typographical errors or re-wording that the authors may wish to consider:

p4/line 1 …shaking hands might.…

p4/6 consider: …it is helpful to explore the public's understanding of…

p4/10 consider: ….illusion of compliance whereas in reality, pathogen transmission is not prevented.

p4/15-17….the sentence …The extent to which these findings….is unclear and should be re-worded.

p8/line 9 (Results): to generate as many preventive actions …

p8/11 suggest replacing ‘generated’ with ‘adopted, performed or conducted’

p9/10 consider re-wording the two sentences starting “Table 3 reports…”

p10 the title of this section could be changed to “Severity, risk, worry and efficacy vs Willingness to engage in each precautionary behaviour”.

p15…acceptability of precautions…

Table 2. This table could be deleted and some text used instead to describe just a few examples of how the open-ended responses were categorised.

Table 3 could confuse readers in that some behaviours share a common letter suggesting no significant difference, yet they also have non-common letter. How should this be interpreted? I suggest an alternative statistical test of comparison that more clearly describes whether the behaviour responses are different or not. Alternatively, the interpretation should be clarified.

Table 4 An alternative title could be Demographic and psychosocial variables vs Willingness …

Is there any weighting applied to these results? The table appears overly complex, can it be simplified eg by concentrating on the significant results?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests