Reviewer's report

**Title:** Perceived risk, anxiety, and behavioural responses of the general public during the early phase of the Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in the Netherlands: results of 3 consecutive online surveys.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 13 August 2010

**Reviewer:** Sandra Mounier-Jack

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper is well written and brings some interesting new information on the population’s behavioural response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. The research question is clearly laid out and the methodology is very well described and relevant. The data are sound and the analysis of results appropriately conducted. Limitations are openly described, notably the possible lack of representativeness of the survey (vs. the overall population).

The results are clearly spelt out and the conclusions and discussions are well supported by data and balanced leading to specific and pertinent recommendations for the national government.

The authors clearly acknowledge past work. The added value of this study is to assess behavioural response to an influenza pandemic of a population sample in real time, rather than based on theoretical scenarios (as many other studies have done in the past). The second benefit of this study is to analyse at different points in time changes in population’s perceptions and behaviours, and to contrast this with changes in disease epidemiology and communication and recommendations messages.

Specific comments include the following:

- Since there is an overrepresentation of older and unemployed population in the sample, it would be interesting to understand more specifically differences in perceptions and behaviours between younger and active population and older and unemployed population.

- The sentence "during the current study period, there was no official recommendation from the Dutch Government......campaign" is not clear. Does it mean that the Dutch government did not issue any recommendation for the public? It would be interesting to see what was the government communication messages and when they were delivered.

- The authors mention "irrational" arguments. Are these really irrational? They are certainly emotional but not necessarily irrational.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

No conflict of interest