Reviewer’s report

Title: Automated data extraction from general practice records in an Australian setting: Comparative analysis of influenza like illness trends in sentinel general practices and emergency departments on a local level

Version: 1 Date: 27 March 2011

Reviewer: Vincenzo Baldo

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The study analyzed the possibility of routine GP data extraction using an automatic tool. The use of this method applied to the surveillance program could serve to enhance the ability to monitor ILI and to detect warning signals of ILI event.

Major Compulsory Revisions

In the method section, the author indicates that Liaison informed them that the GPs accepted and were familiar with the Coming flu tool. Could the authors indicate how they know this or how acceptance was analyzed?

How were the GP sites selected to participate in the study? Is the sample representative of Australian GPs?

The sensitivity and the specificity of the Common flu tool is very high and this is important for the use. The system of direct data collection from the GPs’ database, the most important site of primary care, in public health could enhance an early response to the influenza epidemic but in the use of personal data, is the other information preserved?

The authors clearly indicate the limits of the system which include the impossibility to apply the system to the whole population and the system's complementarity with the other surveillance systems. How was the virological data collected and who collected it? Could the system be linked with this data?

Discretionary Revisions

Could a figure with a flow chart that explains the system be inserted? It may help the reader.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests