Author's response to reviews

Title: Detection of events of public health importance under the International Health Regulations: A toolkit to improve reporting of unusual events by frontline healthcare workers

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editors,

Thank you for constructive feedback on our manuscript entitled Detection of events of public health importance under the International Health Regulations: A toolkit to improve reporting of unusual events by frontline healthcare workers.

Please find attached the revised version with changes marked throughout the text with “track changes”. Furthermore, we have addressed the specific comments point by point below.

By this we hope you find our manuscript acceptable for publication in your journal. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further clarifications.

Yours sincerely,

Emily MacDonald

Referees:

1. Reviewer’s Report: Nicole Skoetz

   There were no revisions required by this reviewer.

2. Reviewer’s Report: Jose A. Fernandez

   a. Event reporting concept references

      Additional information about event reporting, including an expanded definition and a clarification of event reporting in the context of IHR (2005) implementation, has been added to the background of the manuscript.

   b. Legislation

      We believe a review of relevant legal and regulatory requirements for event reporting falls outside the scope of the REACT project objectives and this manuscript. In order to address the reviewer’s concerns that this topic has been neglected, we have summarized with references the available resources relating to legislation of event reporting in Europe in the background of the manuscript. We have also reinforced that this toolkit is designed to be used in conjunction with national legislation supporting IHR (2005) implementation.
c. Event reporting in other countries

Although the scope of this research was restricted to the European context, we have indicated that the toolkit may be useful in other countries. However, we have elected not to expand the content to specifically address event reporting in other countries.

3. Reviewer’s Report: Markku Kuusi

a. Event reporting definition

Additional information about event reporting, including an expanded definition and a clarification of event reporting in the context of IHR (2005) implementation, has added to the background of the manuscript.

b. Role of veterinarians

A mention of the role of veterinarians, as well as other stakeholders, as potential event reporters, is addressed briefly in the discussion section of the manuscript.

Editorial Requirements:

We have revised the manuscript in order to adhere to the PRISMA and RATS Guidelines as much as possible while keeping the manuscript at a reasonable length. However, due to the nature of the topic, the outcome of the research includes both the results of the literature review and expert consultations, as well as the toolkit itself. We therefore believe that a strict adherence to the PRISMA and RATS Guidelines is problematic at several points and we have addressed these below.

4. PRISMA Guidelines

The literature review we conducted diverged slightly from the guidelines as the goal was to collect a broad range of information that may be applicable to the creation of a toolkit. Obstacles and incentives were deliberately loosely defined as we expected very little information directly applicable to our topic. Although a systematic strategy to find literature was employed, records obtained were not assessed for methodological quality as our purpose was primarily exploratory. Additionally, as the literature review is only a small section of the manuscript, the results presented are a summary. We have included further details in the methods section and have included more information on potential bias.

5. RATS Guidelines

We have expanded several sections of the manuscript to addressed points required by the RATS guidelines. Similarly to the literature review, the results of the expert consultations described in the manuscript presents a summary of more complete findings available from the authors upon request.
The background of the manuscript has been expanded to clarify the current context for event reporting at the sub-national level, as well as the practical application of the findings. The research questions (to gather background information for the toolkit and, in particular, to examine potential obstacles and incentives to event reporting) are explicitly stated in the background and methods sections of the manuscript.

The choice of using multiple, qualitative methods has been justified in the methods section of the manuscript. Additionally, the specific objectives and justification for each of the methods chosen (literature review and expert consultations including qualitative interviews) has also been clarified.

We have further clarified the recruitment procedures for the expert consultations and interviews. Actions taken to maintain the anonymity of the expert consultation participants are also described.

The manuscript now includes a description of how analysis of the qualitative data was conducted, using the Framework analysis technique. Several limitations of the research are stated in the discussion, including several weaknesses of the data collection process and the potential implications these may have on the toolkit itself.

6. Ethics

No ethical approval was required for this study. A statement to this effect has been included in the methods section of the manuscript.

7. Figures

The figures have been deleted from the manuscript file and reformatted as per the editorial requirements.