Reviewer's report

Title: We should not be complacent about our population-based public health response to the first influenza pandemic of the 21st century

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2010

Reviewer: Hitoshi Oshitani

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• Major Compulsory Revisions

Effectiveness of various interventions are discussed based on Australian experience on pandemic (H1N1) 2009. But some of their conclusions are not supported by actual data. Following points should be addressed.

[Border screening] The authors stated that border screening was of little value. It is true that some passengers may be in incubation period or have asymptomatic infection. But these facts do not exclude a possibility that some infected passengers can be detected at the border. Cowling et al reported that entry screening for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 had led to short-term delay in local transmission (BMC Infect Dis. 2010 Mar 30;10:82.). There are certain limitations for border screening as they discussed, but there are also some potential benefits despite these limitations.

[School closure] Several negative aspects of school closure in Australia are mentioned with some data, and they concluded that school closure in Australia ‘would not have been effective in interrupting the spread of pandemic’ without providing any actual data.

[Neuraminidase inhibitors for treatment and prophylaxis] The authors concluded that NAIs should be given to those with severe infections or with severe medical condition. However, it has been demonstrated that early treatment is essential to prevent severe complications and NAIs treatment in cases who have already developed severe complications may be too late to have maximum benefit. Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 caused severe infections mainly in those with medical condition. But the next pandemic may not have same characteristic. For example, Spanish Flu in 1918 affected primarily healthy young people.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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