Reviewer’s report

Title: Low Usage of Government Healthcare Facilities for Acute Respiratory Infections in Guatemala: Implications for Influenza Surveillance

Version: 1 Date: 20 September 2011

Reviewer: David Muscatello

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Low Usage of Government Healthcare Facilities for Acute Respiratory Infections in Guatemala: Implications for Influenza Surveillance

This well-written manuscript uses a sound survey methodology to obtain information on the incidence of pneumonia and influenza-like illness syndromes and associated health-care seeking behaviour in the population of Santa Rosa, Guatemala. The survey methodology, response rate and analytical methods are all well described and well designed. The response rate is impressive.

The thing I find most puzzling is that even more developed countries have imperfect and incomplete influenza and respiratory illness surveillance systems which are unable to estimate the burden of influenza in the population. Most modern influenza surveillance systems can only monitor trends in respiratory illness rather than estimate population incidence. Guatemala and other less developed countries are not necessarily worse in that respect than more developed countries. The paper does not place the findings in the context of respiratory surveillance and burden more generally.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. The authors have correctly focused the discussion on answering the aims of the study. Nevertheless, the ILI and pneumonia incidence data reported in the study is in itself very interesting. Information of this kind is not well known even for developed countries and it would be worth highlighting this.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

None identified.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

2. There should be a greater discussion and consideration of the results in comparison more broadly outside of the Central American setting. My understanding is that the burden of influenza is difficult to estimate in even the most wealthy countries. We shouldn’t expect less developed countries to implement surveillance and epidemiological systems that are unachievable
elsewhere.

3. Following on from the above, the statement in the last sentence of the conclusion that expanding surveillance to private health care facilities would allow correction of the burden of influenza and Guatemala and allow comparison of that burden with other countries, seems to show a lack of understanding of the limited information on the burden of influenza in most countries.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests