Reviewer’s report

Title: Road traffic accident mortality in Vietnam: Evidence for policy from a national sample mortality surveillance system

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Reviewer: Yashar Moharamzad

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Road traffic accident mortality in Vietnam: Evidence for policy from a national sample mortality surveillance system

Thank you for sending the article for review.

The authors have reported the results of their study regarding traffic accidents mortality in Vietnam. It is a descriptive study with claims about better estimation of fatalities than that of previous studies in that country. Having access to basic reliable data is of course necessary for more studies.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The issue here is that how much this article is fascinating for international readers. Some findings reported here are predictable in developing countries such as head injury as the most common cause of death or inadequate access to pre-hospital cares. These findings obviously do not expand our knowledge about this topic. Residents of these countries will benefit mostly, in my opinion, from cultural interventions. The bottom line of high mortality rate in developing countries is inappropriate introduction of motor vehicles to these countries without accompanying cultural educations. I think local readers will benefit more from this article in Vietnamese language and publication of these results in a local journal will attract the attention of decision makers more.

2. The data presented are useful for sure for policy makers in Vietnam or similar countries and I appreciate the time and effort made for gathering the data which is a hard task in developing countries. However, I think for research purposes and publication in international journals some interventions to decrease the fatalities should be addressed, for example, the effect of raising general awareness through media, or increasing the number of ambulances, or training paramedics/local people in remote or mountainous areas with insufficient doctors/nurses (according to experiences of Norwegian doctors in Cambodia, Iraq, and Iran), etc.

Minor essential revisions

3. The “Discussion” part is lengthy and some comparisons with former reports have been made with uncertainty regarding the method of data extraction/registration. These parts can be shortened

4. Conclusion: second sentence, “First, the absence of dependable death certification, particularly in a socio-cultural context where the majority of deaths
do not occur in health facilities, means that policy makers are reliant on data of limited quality, which is at times contradictory, or at best, not representative”, what do you mean by “dependable death certification? Does it mean that in Vietnam death certificate is not issued by doctors or hospitals? If a document is recorded, maybe forensic centers would be more appropriate places to gather data and to reach better estimation of fatality rate, please explain it.

5. Conclusion: the sentence “Positive policy initiatives such as mandatory helmet legislation need reliable data to drive ongoing monitoring and enforcement” why do you think for passing legislation to enforce motorcyclists to wear helmets we need reliable data? It is obvious, according to countless reports from different countries, that even without reliable data in a particular region, motorcyclists must wear helmets. If you want to wait so long to gather and compile a reliable report in countries without standard data infrastructures, this may take many years and there will be so uninformed innocent people who will lose their lives before you gather your reliable data. It would be more interesting if you inquire the current motorcyclists in Vietnam without helmet about the reason behind this high risk behavior. Is it low awareness, financial problem, no insight to the depth of problem, etc.

Discretionary revisions

6. Also there are many general repetitive sentences which I think can be removed to summarize the article. This article may be considered only as a “short report” according to the policies of the journal or as an updated data of traffic accident mortality in Vietnam in 2008-2009.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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