Reviewer's report

Title: The FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany 2011 - A practical example for tailoring an event-specific enhanced infectious disease surveillance system

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Reviewer: Jean-Claude Desenclos

Reviewer's report:

Assessment questions:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes it is
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes
3. Are the data sound? Yes
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes very much
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

Reviewers comments:

The authors report their experience in tailoring the German infectious disease surveillance system for a mass gathering event of medium size: the FIFA women's world cup in Germany in 2011. If there is agreements that enhancing the routine surveillance system is legitimous for big scale mass gathering, the appropriate level of enhancement is still a matter of debate (to which extend the routine reporting system needs to be upgraded? Needs of additional tools such as syndromic surveillance systems or specific events tailored tools?). For middle size gathering there is very little experience reported in the literature. Based on their previous experience with the FIFA Men’s World cup 2006 in Germany the authors developed a strategy to tailor the event based enhanced surveillance for this much smaller-scale gathering. Since the information available on the size of the event 6 months prior to it’s occurrence was imprecise, the strategy was based on a needs assessment with the district health authorities in the cities that would host foot-ball matches. Enhancement of surveillance measures was then
based on a majority consensus of the 9 district health authorities surveyed. The measures were implemented the first day of the event until 1 day after it ended. In supplement to the consensus measures the national surveillance institute implemented a daily report of unusual events from district and state health authorities to the national level.

This paper which reports the pragmatic approach taken by the Robert Koch Institute to tailor reasonably the surveillance system to the size of the event and to it’s perception from the local surveillance authorities in charge of infectious diseases is of interest to epidemiologists that work on surveillance of infectious disease and are faced from time to time with mass gathering. It also brings new experience that is useful to share at the international level.

Minor essential revisions

1) The authors refer to the list of notifiable diseases. Since this list varies from country to country it would be useful that they give the list in a table or an internet link so that one can assess it’s extend and how much it covers all the potential infectious diseases risk linked to mass gathering.

2) The authors give estimate of tickets sold. However, it is not indicated how many of those corresponded to persons coming from abroad or moving to common places where the events took place. They also give absolute number, but ratios of incomers to the total population would be much more appropriate since it would give a relative indicator.

3) An unusual event report based on the routine reporting was added. However, the authors do not give the criteria that was used for this reporting. It would be useful to have it.

4) The authors do not provide any estimate of extra time, work and cost that was associated with the enhancement of the surveillance. Although the enhancement was mild it would be extremely useful to still document how much resources, particularly human, it mobilized (for zero detection in this instance) since this mobilized resource was not available for other public health task.

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

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