Reviewer's report

Title: Public health management of antiviral drugs during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic: A survey of local health departments in California

Version: 1 Date: 24 November 2011

Reviewer: Michael Stoto

Reviewer's report:

The authors are correct in noting the importance of learning from the opportunity presented by 2009 H1N1, have responded with an excellent example of qualitative but yet rigorous public health systems research.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Discretionary Revisions

Substantively, the paper notes great variability across the state in how things were done. As the authors note in the Discussion section, it would be useful to know if some of these strategies were better than others, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. It would be useful, though, to comment on this variability, and to speculate about whether this variability is a response to differences in circumstances the LHDs face or an example of excess variability that, in the systems improvement field, suggests inefficiencies that could be removed. An analysis of the survey responses by such characteristics, for instance, might be suggestive.

Technically, since all California LHDs were invited to participate in the research, the target population/sampling frame language in the methods section is not necessary. On the other hand, it would be good to know if there were differentials in the response rate associate with size of jurisdiction/department, rural/urban, SES, or similar factors.

Minor Essential Revisions

For international audiences it should be noted that MediCal is the system that assures care for disadvantaged populations in California.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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