Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus compared with seasonal influenza epidemics on intensive care admissions in New South Wales, Australia, 2007 to 2010: a time series analysis.

Version: 4 Date: 4 July 2012

Reviewer: Ian Seppelt

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting manuscript. The authors have used public health data to perform a population time based analysis of ICU admissions for influenza in the state of NSW between 2007 and 2010. They conclude that while the demand for ICU admission was perceived to be greatest during the 2009/H1N1 pandemic in fact seasonal influenza in 2007 led to a greater (unrecognised) demand. This is in part due to the age distribution (predominantly the elderly in 2007, who often have 'nonspecific' respiratory illnesses perhaps not recognised to be influenza, compared to predominantly younger people in 2009). They have also identified a disproportionate number of indigenous and pregnant requiring ICU admission, which has been consistently seen in other recent series.

This is a well conducted and novel analysis and I have no specific criticisms to make.

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 was involved in the intensive care response to 2009/H1N1 influenza in Australia and New Zealand and was an investigator in the ANZIC Influenza Investigators’ registry. As part of the 2009 pandemic response I had direct dealings with NSW Health, including the third author Michelle Cretikos in her capacity as a public health physician. I have no competing interests (neither financial or intellectual) with regard to this study.