Reviewer's report

Title: Effectiveness of the trivalent influenza vaccine in Navarre, Spain, 2010-2011: a population-based test-negative case-control study

Version: 3 Date: 10 December 2012

Reviewer: Heath Kelly

Reviewer's report:

Given the time elapsed I have re-reviewed this paper in its entirety. I believe it reads well and I am happy that the authors have addressed the previous comments of both reviewers. In particular I believe the language of the conclusion is sufficiently modulated with regard to the possible added benefit of pandemic and seasonal vaccine against pH1N1 infection. In this context I note the most recent comments from Dr Puig-Barbera.

Recognising the differences in the out-patients and hospitalised patients, I think both reviewers would have preferred the primary analysis stratified by health-care setting, rather than the analysis where health care setting has been included as a covariate. However the stratified analyses are available in Table 2.

When reading the manuscript again, I wondered if the authors haven’t overstated the benefits of the TND in the introduction. Certainly a viral endpoint is to be preferred in VE studies, but this endpoint, together with the application of the TND, will not eliminate bias. The TND is a design in evolution and the nuances of its biases are not yet completely understood. The authors might consider a minor re-wording.

I don’t believe ref#4 (a meta-analysis, mostly of RCTS) in the last paragraph of the discussion is the appropriate reference for the comment on selection bias in the TND.

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:

no competing interests