Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of changes in specificity of data recording on cause-specific injury mortality in the United States, 1999-2010

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Reviewer: Huiyun Xiang

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Authors of this manuscript should be commended for taking such a project. However, this study has a fatal flaw in its assumption.

The central assumption of this study is that “the unspecified deaths have the same cause-specific proportions as injuries with cause-specific codes at the same year.” This assumption sets the foundation for all statistical analysis and conclusions in this paper.

Unfortunately, this assumption may be wrong:

1) Without an external data to verify this assumption, this assumption is not valid. Although authors cited a study that used the mortality data from Mexico and the Global Burden of Disease Study, it is still questionable whether this assumption regarding US data is valid or not.

2) There might be some reasons for why some U.S. deaths certificates do not have a specific cause of death. Coders are unlikely to randomly miss these unspecified deaths; therefore, this assumption is not valid.

3) Authors present a result that revealed that “unspecified unintentional injury mortality was negatively correlated with unintentional injuries from falls, poisoning and drowning, and was positively correlated with injuries from motor vehicle crashes, suffocation, fire/burn and natural/environmental disasters for the elderly age 65+, respectively.” Does this provide evidence that the central assumption of their study is wrong?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I do not have conflict of interest with this manuscript.