Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying barriers to chronic disease reporting in Chicago Public Schools: a mixed-methods approach

Version: 2 Date: 18 October 2014

Reviewer: Betty Borowsky

Reviewer’s report:

The question posed by the authors is well defined. The authors wished to discover what barriers deter parents from reporting their child’s asthma or food allergies to the school.

The methods are appropriate. The authors used a mixed-methods approach, including parent focus groups to help inform the development of a parental cross-sectional survey, as well as key informant interviews with parents and school nurses. Some additional details should be included, however (see below).

The limitations of the work are clearly stated.

The authors clearly acknowledge the work upon which they are building. In fact this is a very important aspect of the paper, as it is the logical next step after the authors reported, in a previous paper, that the rate of physician-verified chronic disease reporting for children in the Chicago Public Schools fell far below national and local rates, suggesting that many children with asthma and food allergies were not being reported to the school. Under-reporting is a problem in many urban areas, so their conclusions can assist in improving reporting not only in Chicago, but in other urban districts as well.

The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found, and the writing is acceptable overall.

- Major Compulsory Revisions—None
- Minor Essential Revisions

The authors have shed light on a very important public health issue.

“Asthma is a leading chronic illness among children and youth in the United States and a leading cause of school absenteeism”.
http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/schools.html

And “some children with food allergies face health challenges that can affect their ability to learn and their social and emotional development—even pose a daily threat to their ability to live productive lives”
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/pdf/13_243135_A_Food_Allergy_Web_508.pdf

Whatever can be done to improve reporting to the school is highly desired.

Following are suggestions for improving the paper.
1. The summary of the data that’s presented is sound. However, the survey tool itself should be presented, and the data presented in more detail. For example the final assignment of the data into the eight domains should be included (only six themes are mentioned in table 1).

2. More information about methods should be included.
   a. Lines 60-64. The total number of invited parent participants is not stated, and it is not clear how participants for focus groups and key informants were selected.
   b. Lines 69-71. How were the parents of children with chronic diseases identified? Were they self-reported or identified by school personnel?

3. Again, this is a qualitative study, but some of the summary statements “struggled to identify” line 124; “did not routinely know to complete the annual Student Medical Information form” should be shown to be supported by data.

-Discretionary Revisions

1. Lines 118-120, 154-155 should be placed in the Methods section.
2. 254-265 This should be reduced to a brief statement, as it is only proposed work at this time.

**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 declare that I have no competing interests'