Reviewer’s report

Title: The science of epidemiology and the methods needed for public health assessments: a review of epidemiology textbooks

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2013

Reviewer: Dolores Catelan

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Minor essential revisions

The authors have submitted a much improved draft of the earlier version of their manuscript. I think review papers are not easy to write and the topic covered by the authors is really complicated. Reading the paper I still have the impression that something is missed or confused.

I think, in particular, that the fundamental difference between Epidemiology and Public health is not always clear through the text. As reference for Public health the authors gave the good definition of PAHO. In the list of Essential Public Health Functions (http://www1.paho.org/english/dpm/shd/hp/EPHF.htm) epidemiology is not cited but, for example, surveillance is. But surveillance is considered a “particular methodology” in the paper and excluded from the search. I think surveillance is part of Epidemiology and the methods for surveillance are particular topics which could be excluded. DALY and QUALY measures are common metrics in surveillance environmental epidemiology.

I still believe that the conclusions are in some way misleading. Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Social science, Economy are very different disciplines which need to interact for public health purposes. I do believe that Basic epidemiological textbook need to be not so conformist, as the authors stated. BUT I also believe that particular methods (which belong to other sciences) do not have to be included in epidemiology textbooks.

I think these points should be in some way discussed in the paper.

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'