Author's response to reviews

Title: What have we learned about communication inequalities during the H1N1 pandemic? A systematic review of the literature

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: MS: 1905878039111130 "What have we learned about communication inequalities during the H1N1 pandemic? A systematic review of the literature"

Dear editor,

On behalf of the authors I am submitting the revised version of the manuscript titled, “What have we learned about communication inequalities during the H1N1 pandemic? A systematic review of the literature”, to the journal BMC Public Health addressing the comments provided by the reviewers.

Please find below detailed responses to each comment/suggestion. Revisions were made with special attention to the following objectives: (1) adheres to PRISMA guidelines and include a completed PRISMA checklist; (2) expand the search to additional databases, include only empirical studies and exclude editorials in this review; (3) expand the results section; (4) revise the discussion and provide clear recommendations on a future research agenda as well as how the review could be helpful to practitioners, based on the study's findings.

Respectfully,
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**Reviewer 1:** The topic is of high interest and if well and properly addressed could provide useful information to the health-care workers, also from a practical point of view. An important tool of Evidence-based Medicine (EBM) is the systematic review (SR). Despite the importance of the treated topic, I feel that this review does not fully meet with the standards and rigorous requirements of a SR.

**Major Revisions**

**Comment #1 - Databases**
A SR requires a minimum of 2 databases to be searched and mined for collecting the available data and extract the evidences. Here, the authors have used PubMed and EMBASE. Apparently, this requirement is met, however I am not sure how much the choice of using EMBASE fits the task. EMBASE is a specialized database particularly dealing with pharmacology and pharmacovigilance literature. I would strongly suggest to use other more appropriate databases (such as Scopus, ISI Web of Science, etc.).

**Response:** We agree with the reviewer. We have expanded our search to 5 other major health and social sciences databases and added additional studies to strengthen our reviews.
Comment #2 - Search words

The authors refer to references 7 and 8 for the list of key words. These references (by the same authors) do not provide the answer to which words have been used for the CURRENT SR, since they fit general emergency situation but not address specifically the influenza pandemics. Authors should provide a table or a list of used key words for THIS study.

Response: We agree with the reviewer. A list of search words used for each database has been presented in a table and added to this manuscript.

Comment #3 - Inclusion/exclusion criteria

In this SR, they are NOT clearly stated: instead of giving examples, authors should provide clearly written criteria for including or excluding an item.

Response: We agree with the reviewer. These criteria have been stated in the revised methods section.

Comment #4 - Eligibility

Usually, not-peer reviewed material is NOT included among the selected items (and this is instead the case for the editorials and commentaries that have been included in the manuscript). Authors should exclude these studies.

Response: We agree with the reviewer. The editorials and commentaries have been excluded in the revised manuscript. The methods and results sections have been revised accordingly.

Comment #5 - Results and discussion

These sections are concise and should be substantially expanded giving more details of the findings of the different studies and explaining in more depth how this SR could be useful for workers in the field of Public Health.

Response: We agree with the reviewer. We have substantially expanded the results section and included details of the findings from the expanded review. [ES] The discussion session has also been revised to include explanations of how this review could be helpful to public health practitioners.

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Reviewer 2: Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. I read the paper with great interest, because the topic is very important for public health purpose. Unfortunately, I have a lot of concerns and the paper must be extensively revised before publication.

Major revision

Comment #1: I have a lot of concerns related to the inclusion of editorials in a review.

Response: We agree with the reviewer and have excluded the editorials and commentaries from the review. The methods and results sections have been revised accordingly.

Comment #2: You must rewrite the results section. For each topic, you must state how many papers report results according to your observations. Eg: 10 of 96 paper stated that….

Response: We agree with the reviewer. We have substantially expanded the results section and rewritten the result section to include details of the findings from the expanded review.

Comment #3: Discussion must be revised. This section must be structured as follow.

- main findings (what evidence results from your review?)
In the conclusion section you must report the implications for public health authorities.

Response: We agree with the reviewer. We have restructured the discussion session to include explanations of how this review could be helpful to public health practitioners.

Minor revision

Comment #1 -Abstract:
- Background: please, rephrase the sentence “act upon … inequalities”

Response: We have removed the sentence.

- Results: The sentence “consistent results… outcomes” is too vague for a results section. Please, be consistent in describing the main evidences emerged by the literature review.

Response: We have revised the abstract to better present our findings.

- Conclusion: delete the sentence “consistently… were identified”. You write “evidence found” … What evidence? It is not clear. Please, explain briefly what evidence have to be included in the development of the future communication campaigns, this is a main objective of your paper.

Response: We agree with the reviewer that some of these sentences were unclear and have revised the paragraph. We have also included findings that could be useful to the development of the future communication campaigns in this paragraph.

Comment #2 - Key words:
“H1N1, pandemic” or “H1N1 pandemic”? Please clarify

Response: To ensure we obtain a comprehensive search results, we used “H1N1, pandemic” as key words when collecting data. A list of key words used for the revised review has been presented in a table (Table 1) and added to the revised manuscript.

Comment #3 – Background:
- The sentence “Such inequalities… health outcome” must be rephrased. You must insert a reference.
- You must add some explanation about H1N1 pandemic (When did it start? How many people involved?)
- What is “form of virus”? Did you mean “strain of virus”?
- The sentence “The pandemic influenza… Spanish flu” is unclear. Please rephrase.
- Please replace “the objectives” with “the aim”

Response: We have revised the background accordingly.

Comment #3 – Methods
- What key words did you use for the research? You must state it clearly

Response: The key words used for this review has been presented in a table included in the revised manuscript.

- Be consistent. You must decide to write “Pubmed” (as in the abstract) or “Medline” (as in the text)

Response: Thank you. This has been corrected.
- You must explain inclusion and exclusion criteria

**Response:** The explanation of criteria has been added in the revised manuscript.

- You must report how many paper you find in Pubmed, how many in Embase and how many paper was in both archives

**Response:** The databases used for this review has been presented in a table included in the revised manuscript

- Sentence “Title…investigations, etc.” is redundant

**Response:** Thank you. This has been corrected.

**Comment #3 – Result**

- 54% of studies derived their data from a random sample of population, 42% from a convenience sample, 4% from cluster sampling of the entire population. The remainder of the empirical studies (17%)…. 54+42+4+17=117%!!!! Please clarify.

**Response:** This section has been revised to make it clearer. 84% of the empirical studies are population-based studies and the remainder 16% are information environment analyses.

- It is unclear if the second paragraph of this section referred only to editorials

**Response:** This paragraph has been revised since we have excluded editorials from this review, as suggested.

- “To describe current … to classify the articles” must be deleted. This sentence is appropriate for method section.

**Response:** These sentences have been removed.


**Response:** These sentences have been revised and added clarification.

- page 12, first paragraph. You explain the role of social networks and of the traditional forms of mass media. The empirical studies that referred to this sentences probably were carried out among different people settings (youngs and adults or olds). Please explain

**Response:** These sentences have been revised and added explanation.


**Response:** These sentences have been revised.

- page 13: “motivator”?? “deterrent” ??What means?

**Response:** These sentences have been revised.

**Comment #4 – Discussion**

- “While … measures”. Please delete

**Response:** These sentences have been removed.