Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4
Date: 7 January 2014

Reviewer: Nicola Luigi Bragazzi

Reviewer's report:

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 COMPULSORY REVISIONS

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.).

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.