Author's response to reviews

Title: Verbal autopsy of 48 000 adult deaths attributable to medical causes in Chennai (formerly Madras), India

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RE: Verbal autopsy of 48 000 adult deaths attributable to medical causes in Chennai (formerly Madras), India

The manuscript was revised taking into account the reviewers comments. Details of the modifications/revisions are given below:

1. Table 1: 'Traced' and 'not traced' successfully for VA given
2. Table 2: modified; Both VA and VSD data given to show VA is of limited value in old age
3. The population-based cancer registry data show the possibility of misclassification of cause of death for deaths that occur at hospitals. So cause of death based on death certificate (in VSD) cannot be considered as Gold Standard. Hence we linked the VSD data with the cancer registry data to identify/confirm cancer deaths and then used as Gold Standard for computing sensitivity for VA method to detect cancer deaths that occurred irrespective of place of death (in hospital or in community). There were no false positives and VA picked up cancer deaths which were not identified in the routine morbidity and mortality registration process of the cancer registry. So specificity of VA method was not calculated (refer page 10 and Table 4)
4. Strengths of the study given in Page 15
5. Mortality rates table modified and text added: Table 5 & page 14
6. Wife of the deceased was a better responder. Mentioned in page 12

Thank you very much for your cooperation.