Reviewer’s report

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

Authors:

Vendhan Gajalakshmi (gaja_1@hotmail.com)
Richard Peto (gale.mead@cts.u.ox.ac.uk)
Santhanakrishnan Kanaka (caninst@md2.vsnl.net.in)
Sivagurunathan Balasubramanian (caninst@md2.vsnl.net.in)

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Reviewer: Ms Martha Anker

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

All of the following are minor comments.

1. The results section presents the sensitivity of VA but there is no mention of specificity. It would be useful to present the specificities and to discuss their implications for the main conclusions of the paper.
2. In the results section, it would be interesting to present the proportion of untraced males and females separately, to indicate whether the tracing procedures were equally effective for male and female deaths.
3. The sentence ‘Table 2 shows that the VA reduces the percentage of deaths attributed to unspecified medical causes in each age group’ should be revised - since the statement is not true for ages 70 + (unless there is an error in the table). In addition, it would be clearer if the text indicated that senility was included in unspecified causes.

Competing interests:
None declared.