Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Dr Abla Sibai

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

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

This paper has substantially improved in particular regarding analysis methods and the discussion part.

Few additional minor remarks are presented below:

Results

1. P. 10: last sentence (There were no false positive cancer deaths)
   This is not clear, the authors need to specify the alternate source (was this in reference to the cancer registry?).

2. P. 10-11: last sentence (So the sensitivity of VA to identify neoplasm was 97% (3053/3160)
   In any standard Epidemiology book, the sensitivity is calculated as 1618/1725, based on the numbers in table 4. Any justification why the authors calculated it otherwise?

3. Table 4.
   The results of the linkage made between the VSD data and the Cancer Registry records may be presented as table 4 a. This suggested table would provide the reader with a clear presentation of the numbers missed by VSD (288 cases) and possibly the fact of 'no false positives' cancer deaths.

4. P. 11: last paragraph
   There is a need to specify the source of data for presentation of death rates. It is not clear whether this analysis was based on VA or VSD? Specify the source in the text as well in the title of the table. Also, a sentence or two on the source of data of baseline population distribution, i.e. the denominator, (census.., year..?) would clarify the issue.

Discussion
The comparison of the results of sensitivity with respect to Cancer in the present paper to those obtained by Chandramohan to detect communicable diseases seems irrelevant.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.