Reviewer's report

**Title:** Attitudes of healthcare workers in U.S. hospitals regarding smallpox vaccination

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**Reviewer:** Michael Pearce

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

**Advice on publication:** Accept after discretionary revisions

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

This paper presents results from a study of the attitudes of healthcare workers in US hospitals to smallpox vaccination. Given current concerns about acts of bioterrorism this paper will provide useful information to health workers and public health officials around the world, but particularly in the US.

The style of the paper is easy to read. The study methods are well described, and the authors conclusions are valid. The authors’ acknowledged the limitations on interpretation and extrapolation resulting from their sampling procedure.

a) Discretionary revisions

**METHODS, Study Sample.**

p5, para1. The sentence 'Hospital epidemiologists or infection...' is redundant, unless the authors feel it is important to know how many hospitals were approached.

p6, para1. The sentence 'Of the 1,443 surveys distributed to staff...' would be better placed at the beginning of RESULTS.

b) Compulsory revisions

**BACKGROUND**

p5, para1. In the last sentence, the authors say 'In Israel... according to press reports [1].' yet they only reference one report. Should this not be ‘according to one press report’?
RESULTS, Attitude toward smallpox vaccination

p10, para1. In the sentence 'In response to the question...' the authors state '...while the remaining 39% answered "probably not (12%), "no" (12%), or "don't know" (16%)": 12 + 12 + 16 39. The authors should use another significant figure in their percentages.

TABLE 1

p18. Is 'N' supposed to be 'n' in the column for 'Probably not/no/don't know'?

p18-20. sub-totals across the table do not add up to the total e.g. For category 'All', there are 708 respondents for 'Yes/probably' and 450 respondents for 'Probably not/no/don't know', but 1165 respondents in total: 708 + 450 1165. Similarly, the number of respondents in each category in each risk category do not add up to the figures 1165, 708 and 450 given in 'All' e.g. in the section 'Perceived risk of attack' 610 respondents were 'High/intermediate', 400 were 'Low/next to zero' and 144 were 'Can't guess': 610 + 400 +144 1165. These anomalies need to be corrected or explained. If necessary, corresponding changes should be made in the text.

The description of the statistical analysis is appropriately concise. However, a proper assessment of the analysis would require substantially more information. Presentation of such information in the paper would detract from the paper, but it would be reassuring if the authors declared that a full account of the analysis could be available on request.

Competing interests:

None declared.