Reviewer's report

Title: Compulsory and Recommended Vaccination in Italy: evaluation of coverage and non-compliance between 1998-2002 in Bologna

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2005

Reviewer: Lawrence E Barker

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

On page 5, the statement 'there is a marked difference between the two Districts considered' appears. However, the polio coverages for the regions are 96% vs 98% (rounded) and the DPT coverages are 93% vs 97% (rounded). The authors should discuss the issue of whether these differences are large enough to have any public health impact. With such high coverages, one could reasonably expect herd immunity to protect the unvaccinated.

The monitoring of immunization coverage does not make 'possible to follow trend in the incidence of preventable diseases' -- disease surveillance does that. Monitoring immunization coverage allows us to identify areas where disease outbreaks are likely to occur, and possibly assist us in predicting future outbreaks. Also, monitoring can help keep immunization coverage high -- that which gets measured is often that which gets done.

The phrase 'newborn residents on 31 December' is confusing. Does it mean children who were under one year old as of 31 December, or something else? The phrase should be made more precise.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The authors are somewhat careless about using acronyms that have not been spelled out (for example, MMR, Hib, or WHO). While most readers will understand these acronyms without explanation, some might not. All acronyms need to be spelled out at first appearance and used consistently thereafter.

The authors are somewhat careless about using 'whooping cough' and 'pertussis' interchangeably. One term should be used. 'Pertussis' is preferred, but that usage is not essential.

The reference to 'subjects under 18' should be changed to 'subjects under 18 years of age'.

I would change 'the health of the society' to 'the health of society'.

The phrase 'the most representative vaccinations' is somewhat confusing. I would like to see a clearer explanation.
A comma should go after 'ICONA' in the phrase 'a cluster survey, called ICONA'.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The sentence that begins 'in the wake of ... ' is very long and confusing. This sentence should be broken up into shorter pieces.

The phrase 'divided into various categories' should be replaced with 'categorized'.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.