Reviewer’s report

Title: Variations in influenza vaccination coverage among the high-risk population in Sweden in 2003/4 and 2004/5: a population survey

Version: 1 Date: 20 March 2007

Reviewer: Mary Patricia Nowalk

Reviewer’s report:

General

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

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.
I have the following comments and concerns:

Major revisions:

- Abstract results section, the statement regarding the number of health care professionals is unclear as stated. Does this mean the number of providers each person has? Please clarify.
- Introduction, the sequence of the 3rd and 4th sentences should be reversed for logical flow of thoughts.
- Introduction, the statement regarding the number of health professionals involved in vaccination . . . There is considerable evidence in the US literature that standing orders that permit nursing personnel to administer vaccines without a physician’s order are effective in raising vaccination rates.

- Similarly, other literature suggests that vaccination should be offered at any visit (during influenza season) in order to increase uptake.
  - Crockett et al American Medical Association 1999
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention MMWR 1999: 48;(RR4) 1-23.

These findings should be noted in the discussion.

- Introduction last paragraph, there is nothing in the introduction that leads to the first research question. Why would you expect a change in VCR from 2003/04 to 2004/05? Was there a change in vaccine policy, payment system, media campaign, severity of flu epidemic? It is important to clarify why these data were later combined.

- Methods, a better description of the omnibus is necessary for example, what was the sampling scheme? How many questions were there altogether? How long was the total interview? Were individuals called at home? Are people required to see health care providers within their county of residence?

- I am not completely comfortable with using the combined questionnaires without a better explanation that the provider data is associated with the individual respondents.

- Results first paragraph, I suggest putting the national data into Table 1 and just summarizing the similarity between the study samples and the national sample.

- Results second paragraph, I would like to know the overall VCR for each group especially because you discuss this in the conclusions section. There is no explanation as to why the data from two years were combined. There should be a statement explaining this fact. Also, this paragraph would be more useful if you first explained what is found in Table 2, then summarized the results by saying the VCR for elderly persons ranged from 78% in Jonkoping to 12% in Orebro and for diseased persons ranged from --- to ---%.

- The section titled Conclusions should be Discussion and should not only summarize the findings, but compare them with finding from other studies so that they can be put into context.

- The paragraph beginning “Summarizing,” should be given a subtitle “Conclusions.”

- Table 1 as stated above, I suggest putting national data into this table.

- Table 2, I suggest moving the data from the right side of the table to the left side.

- Also, it would be less complex if you were to set up the (new) left side like this:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elderly Disease Healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County #respondents %vaccin. #respondents %vaccin. #respondents %vaccin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Abstract Methods, second paragraph country should be county.
Methods paragraph 1, Sentences 1 and 2 could be combined and Sentences 3 and 4 could also be combined.
Table 4 footnote 3 has a typo.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.