Reviewer's report


Version: 2 Date: 16 May 2007

Reviewer: Douglas M Fleming

Reviewer's report:

General
I accept that these revisions accommodate my earlier reservations but I feel you could make more of the incongruity of the peaks disclosed in figure 1.

One or two points which I will deal with page by page. (Points 2 and 6 should be considered major.)

1. Abstract – I think you should mention that the peaking of admissions and influenza-like illness did not coincide.
2. Conclusions – although I did not disagree with you about influenza vaccination policy, it is nevertheless not shown in this paper at all that improving vaccination coverage will reduce excess burden in hospitals. The paper shows that there is an excess burden as a result of influenza but it does not give us any information about vaccine effectiveness. Accordingly, I think that your second sentence should be removed.

3. Page 6, 2nd paragraph – pneumonia diagnostics should read pneumonia diagnoses and secondary diagnostics should read secondary diagnoses.
4. Page 7 – Discussion, 2nd line – epidemics on hospital admission in Spain, morbidity is not quite the right word there.
5. 3rd paragraph – ... is a possible overestimation of excess morbidity.
6. Page 8 – middle of the page, the sentence commencing ‘As our results show’ – this section should be revised. I suggest as follows: ‘Our results show that particularly in persons over 65 years of age but also in those under 5 there were excess hospital admissions in periods of influenza H3N2 activity. These findings encourage the continued use and strengthening of campaigns to increase vaccination coverage in these age groups. (This paragraph should end with this sentence.)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 have received financial support both to attend and address meetings on influenza vaccine related issues though since I do not see this paper as addressing vaccine effectiveness, I do not think I have a competing
interest.