Reviewer's report

Title: Survey of public knowledge about Echinococcus multilocularis in four European countries: Need for proactive information

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Reviewer: Dominique Vuitton

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Adressing the question using phone interviews is quite appropriate. However, the methodology seems doubtful. I really wonder if the size of the sample is appropriate to answer accurately the questions under study...The authors do not say why they chose to divide the various countries differently (for instance 8 regions for Czech Republic and 24 regions for Switzerland, that are both rather "small countries" regarding area and population; or 16 regions for Germany and 9 regions for France, that are both rather "large countries" regarding area and population...); it seems that the same numbers of people were interviewed in the 4 countries, irrespective of their area and population sizes (even higher in Czech republic than in Germany...) and the relative size (compared to the total area of the country) of the geographic areas where alveolar echinococcosis is prevalent. This would lead to a surestimation of "absence of knowledge" or "erroneous knowledge" in countries where very few regions are endemic for AE and the ratio of "exposed people" to "non-exposed people" is low, compared to countries with a more balanced ratio. In fact, it is not clear from the text, figures and tables if among the 500 people interviewed in each country an equal number was interviewed in "low", "middle" or "high" endemic areas or if the sampling was randomized on the whole country. The number of interviewed people in each of these categories should be given for the 4 countries under study. As far as France is concerned, "Nord-Pas de Calais" is not a region of "middle" risk, but low risk; conversely, in "Champagne-Ardennes", classified as "low risk", Ardennes is clearly a "middle risk" endemic area (or even, if we consider the data from 2000 to 2007, a "high risk" endemic
The sampling procedure may thus be responsible, at least partly, for the observed differences in the data. In addition, we do not know how the questions were actually translated in Czech and French; e.g. the equivalent of "fox tapeworm" does not exist in French...If the people interviewed do not understand the question, they may give absurd answers. I guess that including French and Czech authors would have ensured a better accuracy of the data, which give the impression that generally the best knowledge was associated with German speaking! The general message of a lack of knowledge on E. multilocularis transmission in the population of endemic European countries seems adequate.

3. Are the data sound?
If the methodology is not adequate, of course, the data cannot be sound

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
I am not sure at all that the conclusions given by the authors, and the explanations they give on the discrepancies between the various countries, are correct (see methodology problems). The authors insist on the necessity of addressing the information messages to those people living in the high risk areas

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Not so much

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes; however, a few papers or recent information from France and Czech Republic, regarding urban fox population and percentage of infected foxes in the various areas of these countries are missing.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes if we refer to the data presented

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes (except spelling mistakes in French names!).

My advice is that the paper could be published only with "Major Compulsory Revisions", provided that they are able to clarify their methodology, and,
if actually inaccurate, to make modifications.

My final opinion would thus be (I cannot know if revision is actually possible) either "Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions" or "Reject because scientifically unsound".