Reviewer's report

Title: The Impact of Methodological 'Shortcuts' in Conducting Public Health Surveys

Version: 3 Date: 10 December 2007

Reviewer: Rolf Holle

Reviewer's report:

The authors present an interesting case study of a public health survey which they use to illustrate three methodological aspects in the design and conduct of such studies. The paper is well written and of interest to researchers performing similar surveys. However, it remains unclear which of their findings could be generalized to surveys with different aims and in different countries.

Major compulsory revisions:

â¢ The most striking result is that of different estimates of vaccination coverage under the three approaches. The vaccination card method seems to be the most biased one but at the same time the most resource-intensive one. Please explain why it was not sufficient to base the vaccination prevalence on the combination of data from Health Department records and Vaccination Registry alone. This is crucial to understand the study design.

Minor essential revisions:

â¢ Provide a more specific title, e.g. with reference to vaccination
â¢ Unfortunately no information on time resources for revisiting households was documented. Please provide an estimate, if possible, and comment how many, if any, revisits you consider worthwhile.
â¢ Nearly no literature concerning the three methodological issues is mentioned in the discussion. Please discuss your results in the context of findings from other studies.

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: Acceptable

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