Author's response to reviews

Title: Seasonal Influenza Vaccination in the Americas: 1970s-2008

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Dear Dr. Norton:

We submit for your consideration our paper "Seasonal Influenza Vaccination in the Americas: 1970s-2008". The authors are Alba María Ropero-Álvarez, Hannah Jane Kurtis, M. Carolina Danovaro-Holliday, Cuauhtémoc Ruiz-Matus, and Jon Kim Andrus. The manuscript is original. All of the authors have contributed to the work presented in the article and have approved the final manuscript. No specific funding was required for writing this article.

In the Americas, only a small number of countries have utilized the seasonal influenza vaccine for a number of decades. Over the last five years, however, there has been a rapid uptake of this vaccine in countries and territories in the Americas, targeting a wide range of risk groups, including elderly populations, children, health workers and individuals with chronic disease, among others. Despite these advances, vaccination in tropical areas remains challenging as knowledge of influenza epidemiology is less clear here than in temperate zones. In this manuscript we describe both the history and current situation regarding the use of seasonal influenza vaccine in the Americas. We also offer suggestions as to further work needed to optimize the use of this important vaccine. This article should serve as a baseline for public health officials in the Americas as well as for those in other areas of the world. Moving forward, this article will encourage countries to better internally monitor the implementation of influenza vaccination among their target populations as well as to determine whether influenza vaccination recommendations should be expanded to other population risk groups. Particularly, monitoring influenza epidemiology in tropical areas will be important in order to define the best formulation and improve the timing of vaccination in this sub region.

We trust that this article will be accepted for publication by BMC Public Health. As a well-respected, open access journal, BMC Public Health should provide a wide forum for sharing information regarding seasonal influenza vaccination, an issue of growing global interest with concerned parties.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me at any time if there is any other information that might prove helpful.

Sincerely yours,

Alba María Ropero-Álvarez