Reviewer’s report

Title: Timeliness of National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System in Korea

Version: 1 Date: 14 November 2008

Reviewer: Trang Q Nguyen

Reviewer’s report:

This review of the Korean National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System is generally well-written and an important contribution, more broadly, to studies of surveillance systems and, more specifically, to improving disease reporting timeliness in Korea.

The manuscript could be improved in several ways. The text should be shortened; there is some redundancy and some text that is not necessary. The results could be better highlighted with the inclusion of results from statistical computations and an improved editing.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. Methods – Why was >100 cases used as the cut off for disease selection? It seems important to include an example from Group 4 despite not having 100 cases/year.

2. Results, “Cumulative distribution of time lags” – It is not clear how these results should be interpreted.

3. Results, “Cumulative distribution of time lags”, 4th sentence – The use of the phrase “significant variation” implies statistical significance. A statistical comparison would be helpful.

4. Discussion – The focus on the individual diseases throughout the Discussion eventually is too narrow a perspective. After the examination of timeliness by disease, the Discussion should broaden its scope into if/how those diseases are representative of the Groups they are in and what the difference in timeliness between Groups means for public health practice around those types of diseases.

5. Figure 3 – The different lines are not clearly distinguishable. The lines for mumps and scrub typhus, which are indicated as being broken lines, do not seem to be in the graphs.

Minor essential revisions:

6. Abstract Conclusions – The first sentence is not derived from the background and results shared in the Abstract. The Conclusions should focus on what the reader can conclude from what has been shared in the Abstract.
7. Background – Additional information about the number of diseases in each group and a few examples (not used in the study) should be included.

8. Methods – Why did the authors include an explanation for why tuberculosis and malaria were not studied? The reader is left wondering if there were other diseases that also warrant an explanation.

9. Results, 1st paragraph, 2nd sentence – Include a proportion for each of the diseases listed.

10. Results, 1st paragraph, 6th sentence – Was the difference in reporting proportion between shigellosis and mumps statistically significant?

11. Discussion – Were there any outbreaks during the years of interest that could enhance the discussion on timeliness?

12. Discussion – Reporting to the US CDC is not voluntary.

Discretionary revisions:

13. Discussion – The paragraph about the comparison to findings in other countries can be condensed.

14. Discussion – The paragraph discussing the importance of timeliness has already been discussed in the Introduction.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.