Reviewer's report

Title: Early warning detection of heat wave morbidity using syndromic surveillance in emergency departments.

Version: 2 Date: 17 October 2008

Reviewer: Sari Kovats

Reviewer's report:

When assessing the work, please consider the following points:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

Study design is relatively simple - are most sophisticated approach would have been better, e.g. to look at day of week effects, and other hot periods.

3. Are the data sound?

Data are appropriate but the time period is too limited to make robust conclusions.

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?

Discussions and conclusions slightly overstate the results.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Would prefer more discussion of the limitations of the analysis.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
- Minor Essential Revisions
More discussion is needed about the limitations of this analysis and the wider implications of the results. The authors place too much emphasis on the limited number of "syndromes" that were found to be raised during the heat wave alert period. The possible over-diagnosis by doctors, aware that a heat wave has been declared, is not considered. It would be good to compare increases in visits during hot weather than an alert was not declared.

Abstract- Second line of first section - This sentence is not clear.

Page 5. Some further clarity if required before describing the early warning system at effective - in case it is interpreted as meaning effective in preventing mortality, when the authors mean effective in forecasting the heat wave.

The English is also improved although there are still a few minor errors.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

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