Reviewer’s report

Title: Implementation evaluation of the Dutch 'national heat plan' among long-term care institutions in Amsterdam: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 14 September 2012

Reviewer: Cees de Baat

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript “Implementation evaluation of the Dutch ‘national heat plan’ among long-term care institutions in Amsterdam: a cross-sectional study” is of importance for the prevention of heat-related mortality. However, three problems (needing major compulsory revision) are restricting the value of the study and thus the value of the manuscript: (1) Amsterdam is a very small, not representative part of the Netherlands, (2) it is questionable if frequency and intensity of heat waves in this part of the world will indeed increase, and (3) many references used are not accessible for the majority of the readers of the journal.

Minor essential revisions needed

Abstract

The abstract contains several unclear or inaccurate formulated passages and sentences: “implementation of measures”, “surveys sent”, “in the last three years”, “cooling largely depended on outdoor sunscreens” (sunscreens are not cooling, but protecting to the sun), “reporting of medication use”, “the experience in Amsterdam is”, “training of staff training”.

Background

Is there any scientific evidence or indication of global warming and an increase of frequency and intensity of heat waves? The authors are suggesting this in the first paragraph, but the references provided (3-7) are only reporting assumptions. References 1, 3, 4, 8, 15, and 18 are not accessible for the majority of the readers.

“susceptible ages”: susceptible for what at which ages?

The literature overview on mortality rates during heat waves should mention the years concerned.

Methods

Not usual terms used, such as “care manager”, “homes for the elderly”, “combined facilities”, community living arrangements”, “assisted living facilities”, and “offices of home care providers” should be specified or defined.

Why did the authors send their questionnaire only to care institutions in Amsterdam and not to all care institutions in the Netherlands or to an aselect
sample of all care institutions in the Netherlands? Several times the term “survey” is used, whereas “questionnaire” is meant. The authors should make clear how and why they selected 23 measures, only 60 per cent of all recommendations of the heat protocol. Reference 19 is not accessible for the majority of the readers.

Results
“Respondents” should read “care managers”? Or are the authors not sure that the questionnaires were completed by the care managers? It seems not correct to present the research data of the 24 care institutions with a heat protocol present together with the research data of the 3 care institutions with a heat protocol in development. How could the latter group answer questions regarding measurements present? What is meant by “extra drinks rounds” and “advising physicians when residents take medication”?

Discussion
References 20 and 21 are not accessible for the majority of the readers.

Conclusions
The first sentence is not correct since 50% responded and only 67% of the responders had a protocol (in development).

Table 1
“different parts” = “various accommodations”? “rooms/apartment residents” = “residents’ rooms”? “total institutions” = “total number of institutions”?

Table 2
Due to rounding off errors, one addition sum of percentages amounts 99 and another one 101.

Table 3
Due to rounding off errors, several addition sums of percentages are amounting 99 or 101.

f) “adjusting” should read “reducing”?
g) “adjusting” should read “reducing”?
i) What is meant by “washing ill residents at will, possibly by washing with care”?

**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:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests