Reviewer's report

Title: Healthcare provider knowledge, experience and challenges of reporting adverse events following immunisation: a qualitative study

Version: 2 Date: 12 February 2013

Reviewer: Greg Rowles

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Major compulsory revisions:
Page 21, table 1:
in the conclusions, the authors talk about a need to improve the undergraduate education of adverse events, but it seems all the participants completed their undergraduate education decades before, so it may be that they cannot reflect on current undergraduate education, only continuing professional education. It would be reasonable to state that this study is a reflection of non-recent graduates.

minor essential revisions:
Page two, conclusions:
'most participants appreciated the importance of adverse events surveillance....' I did not see any information within the article to lead to this conclusion. I would have thought that if it was only "most", then it would have been significant to explore and comment on those who did not believe it was important. I note that there are guiding questions to prompt this discussion.

Page three, background: reporting of adverse events is mandated by jurisdictional legislation in many states, but not South Australia where this study was done. In addition vaccine manufacturers are mandated to report. I think that the background should refer to 'in South Australia', rather than 'in Australia', or there should be some correction to the suggestion that health professionals and vaccine manufacturers voluntarily submit.

Page 15, discussion:
is there any evidence for your comment 'that underreporting may in part be attributed to the administration of less reactogenic vaccines...", Either a reference, or from your interviews? I would have thought that this may have lead to less reports, but not necessarily underreporting, but you could even argue the other way that more reactogenic vaccines would lead to more adverse events being more frequently described as common, or expected, and therefore under reported. Although there was some confusion on how to report, I don't believe that you presented any results that showed that there was a lack of awareness of reporting.
Page 22 table 2:
experience of an aefi, question four: spelling mistake,? Event.

discretionary revisions:

Page 1
Background: it is probably more correct to refer to health-care professionals rather than 'medical'professionals, as the study includes nurses.

Page 2, conclusions:
perhaps one of the conclusions also needs to be that there needs to be clearer definition and guidelines about what is an adverse event that needs to be reported, as well as education in these definitions and guidelines. I would make based on the fact that all the nurses stated that they had received formal training, but many of them still had misunderstandings. In addition to the emergency consultants having differing interpretation of 'serious'.

Page 3, background:
at the time this was written, it was the advisory committee on safety of medicines, but it is now the 'advisory committee for safety of vaccines', and this may need to be clarified.

I would also say that PMS is essential to a better understanding of possible adverse effects when vaccines are used outside the controlled conditions of clinical trials.

Page 22, guiding questions:
obviously word constraints would prevent discussion of all the questions, and you have just taken the most conclusive information obtained, but I wonder if a table could summarise some more of the responses, even to demonstrate that there was no consistency or constructive answers.

I would have been interested to read discussions or suggestions about preferred format for reporting. I note 1 comment suggesting automatic software downloading.

I would also be interested the presence or lack of policy/protocol at workplaces such as GP practices, immunisation services and emergency departments. Depending on your results may be a useful conclusion or discussion as to whether an established policy with possible secretarial support from the workplace may assist in reporting.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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'