Reviewer’s report

Title: Food safety in hospital: knowledge, attitudes and practices of nursing staff of two hospitals in Sicily, Italy

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2007

Reviewer: Italo Francesco Angelillo

Reviewer’s report:

This paper presents the results of a survey conducted in nurses involved in food service functions in two hospitals in Italy to assess their current knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning food safety. Methods appear to be sound but some changes in the analysis and presentation of data may strongly improve the manuscript.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction:

a) Though from a cross-sectional point of view, the Authors have attempted to identify determinants of knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding food safety and this should be addressed in the objectives of the study.

Methods:

a) Setting: The authors describe how is catering organized, but do not give details on the role of nurses in the delivery of food. This should be clarified.

b) Survey instrument: The Authors report that the questionnaire was addressed to all nurses. But should nurses not involved in food distribution, such as those working in the emergency department or in the operating rooms, be part of the study? How can they describe practices they do not attend to? This should be clarified.

c) Survey instrument: The Authors state that to minimize the non-respondent prevalence, the questionnaire was self-administered and confidentiality of the answers was warranted. However, self administration is considered a good way to facilitate “true” answers, whereas to improve response rate in person interviews are more effective.

d) Statistical procedures: The Authors report that they looked for associations between questionnaire answers on knowledge, attitudes and practices and demographic characteristics of respondents. However, in the results the associations were found also according to work characteristics, such as length of service, hospital, etc. It would be better to indicate clearly which variables were tested (age, sex, length of service, etc.). Moreover, the performed on univariate analysis, it would be better to choose some outcome variables for knowledge, attitudes and practice and perform some multivariate analysis (i.e. using logistic regression) that allows correction for confounders.

Results

a) Descriptive results should be more concise, they almost report what is in the Tables.

b) In the results on attitudes the Authors report that “a high proportion of respondents was unaware that defrosted food should not be
refrozen”. I would not pose such an interest on this question since it was formulated as a “double negation” question and it is well known that this kind of question may not be very reliable.

Discussion

a) The Authors had an overall low response rate. Moreover, the two institutions they chose were significantly different according to several characteristics. Issues on validity and generalizability of their results as the limitations of the study should be discussed.

b) On last page of the discussion the 2nd and 3rd paragraph are not related to discussion of results. I suggest they could be eliminated or included in the Introduction.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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'