Reviewer's report

Title: Variability of adenoidectomy/tonsillectomy rates among children of the Veneto Region, Italy

Version: 1 Date: 17 November 2008

Reviewer: Jochen P Windfuhr

Reviewer's report:

Review
Variability of adenoidectomy/tonsillectomy rates among children of the Veneto Region, Italy
Ugo Fedeli et al.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? YES
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? YES
3. Are the data sound? YES
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? YES
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? YES
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 Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?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
9. Is the writing acceptable? Absolutely

Duplication or plagiarism? NO
Research falsified or manipulated? NO

Confidential comments to editors
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None.

Reviewer's report
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- Major Compulsory Revisions

ABSTRACT: Please reword the last sentence in "results" as well as in "conclusion". Reduce the number of abbreviations to (A/T)

BACKGROUND: no comments.
METHODS: please specify the range of hospitals/LHU with an otorhinolaryngological unit including the number of surgeons and the number of procedure (A, AT, T). Did the reimbursement change within the time period 2000-2006? Is the number of procedures related to 1. number of pediatricians within the hospitals? 2. number of children living in the specific LHU? 3. Number of inhabitants per LHU? Urban vs. non-urban LHUs?

“Graphically inspected” do you mean: illustrated
“indivuate”: do you mean: identify?

What do you mean by: mid-year population?

If the number of inhabitants is biased by immigration, how is it biased by emigration?

How do the authors include factors caused by the immigration process itself? Are there differences related to the origin of the immigrants? Political refugees or people without health insurance are certainly to be distinguished from foreigner families who can afford treatment in private hospitals at any time. Please clarify reimbursement of people without health insurance: is it attractive to treat this patient population, in other words: do physicians and hospitals benefit from the treatment of this patient group. Are therefore comparisons “italian” vs. “non-italian” useful?

Children who underwent (A/T) procedures between 2004 and 2006 were 2-9 years of age. In other words, this patient population was born in the Veneto region between 1995 and 2004. Does the analysis of A/T procedures include this issue? Wouldn’t the report benefit if the authors distinguish between children born in the Veneto region vs., born outside the Veneto region or be restricted to children born in the Veneto region? It remains questionable whether or not the authors have any information concerning the birthrate of the different motherlands of the immigrants.

RESULTS: …declined until 2003, thereafter remaining stable (fig. 1).

“Regarded”: do you mean “included”. The article would benefit if the authors would explain the results of Poisson regression for the group of readers who is not familiar with the data.

DISCUSSION: Which climatic factors had an impact on the T rates?

What do you mean by “However, the hierarchical model shows that A/T rates among children aged 2-9 years ….”? Please explain and/or re-word.

How is the non-Italian patient population of the Veneto region in comparable to the group of non-Italians in the former analysis of Materia and Spadea (citation 20)? Are A/T rates obtainable for the motherlands of the non-Italian patient population?

TABLE: Model 1 and Model 2 as well as males appears confusing to the reader. So you mean male vs. female gender? Erase line 1 and 2 of what you label as “Model2”, insert A/T rates (x1000) in each LHU (10-40 y) to what is labelled as “Model 1”. “Non-national children”: do you mean "A/T rates Italian vs. non-Italian
(x1000) in each LHU (2-9 y)”? Erase “LHU-level variance in “Model 1” and “Model 2” and insert it into the legend. The legend should be worded understandable, supported by the numbers resulting from statistical methods in brackets.

- Minor Essential Revisions
  Number the pages
  Reduce the number of abbreviations to A/T. IFF, CI, HDR do not contribute to a better understanding.
  Replace “residents” by “inhabitants”

- Discretionary Revisions
  Figure 1: replace “surgeries” by “n”

Level of interest

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- This is an article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests.

Quality of written English

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- Acceptable

Statistical review

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- Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician?
  - Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests

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- Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future? NO
- Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future? NO
- Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript? NO
- Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript? NO
- Do you have any other financial competing interests? NO
- Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper? NO
I declare that I have no competing interests.

Advice on publication
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- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions.