Reviewer's report

Title: Causes of death in Tonga: quality of certification and implications for statistics

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2011

Reviewer: Ruy Laurenti

Reviewer's report:

Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The question posed by the authors is not new. There are a lot of papers published regarding this matter but, in my point of view, this paper is very important because for the first time it was performed in Tonga. And, much important, it is very well defined.

Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
The methods applied are very appropriate and well described. The details are sufficient and permit to replicate the work. However I would like to suggest to the authors to describe and comment about the main or principal cause (diagnostic) on the medical record in the hospital. In general the patient is admitted in the hospital due to a manifestation of an underlying cause (U.C) and this U.C is not informed or registered. As an example the patient is hospitalized (admitted) due to congestive heart failure and died and there is not information about what was the cardiopathy and however this U.C is declared the death certificate.

Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Very good discussion although a little large. The conclusions are very clear and balanced and well supported by the data.

I strongly support the words of the authors… “This paper presents the first published validation study of cause of death data in a Pacific Island country and demonstrates clearly the impact of non-communicable diseases on life expectancy in Tonga”.

These comments bring to the reader the idea of the importance of this paper.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable