Reviewer's report

Title: The effect of influenza vaccination among general practitioners: a controlled trial [NCT00221676].

Version: 1 Date: 9 March 2006

Reviewer: Mary Patricia Nowalk

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

There are four major areas for improvement in this paper:
1. It would benefit from clearer, crisper writing. For example, some words are incorrectly used and some sentence structure is confusing. I suggest using more headings and subheadings, numbers within lists in the text and careful proofreading. Table 1 would benefit from rearrangement of the data into four columns of data: Vaccinated 2002, Unvaccinated 2002 and Vaccinated 2003, Unvaccinated, 2003. Symbols for non significant values should not be included. Table 2 should have labeling consistent with table 1 and significant values should be bolded. Alternatively, given that there is very little significant data in this table, it might be better presented in the text and eliminating the table. Table 3 - too many footnotes and they are not consistent. Figure 2 does not show a clear pathway from the initial study sample to the final sample used for analysis. It should not be in a table form. There are too many figures for the amount of data and size of the study. Perhaps Figures 3, 4 and 5 could be combined?
2. The title is misleading. I would not consider this study to be a controlled trial. Physicians self selected vaccination or not and were asked to self swab when they had symptoms of RTI. It is unknown why those who did not swab, failed to do so, were they too sick? Did they stay home and not have the swabs with them?
3. Small sample size and large loss of data, especially in year 2 weaken the data and the conclusions that can be drawn. How many of the GPs were in each age group? were there sufficient? The paper would benefit from clearer description of statistical analyses.
4. The conclusions are rather strongly stated, given that this is a small study and presumably the only one of its kind.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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**Which journal?**: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

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

**Quality of written English**: Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review**: Yes

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.