Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 13 March 2006

Reviewer: Herman J Bueving

Reviewer's report:

General
- The study is not blinded, the ethical argument the authors mention is not clarified and in my opinion questionable. The authors should describe the ethical arguments.
  but this may have biased the results: GPs who were aware that they were vaccinated, may have reported fewer RTI symptoms for this reason (because they thought it could not be influenza).
  - In the introduction the humoral response should be specified (IgA-hypothesis)
  - There may be GP's who did not vaccinate themselves, did the authors in any way controlled the vaccination?
  - How did the Gp's recalled the number of patients with influenza the last week?
  - Results: what is meant by "an average highest body temperature", is it during influenza or during the season with a one time positive swab?

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
- sample size: did the investigators calculate in advance how many GPs would be needed to detect a clinically relevant difference?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
- A native speaker should assist the authors. It seems to me that some phrases are Flemish-like or Dutch-like.'High time to look closer into these issues' ; 'collected by post' ; "influence of several variables"; "general characteristics between GPs" are obvious examples.
- figures 3,4,5 cannot be interpreted without the text, the age should be mentioned on the X-axis en the Odss ratio on the Y-axis.
- tables 1-3 shoould be a part of the text..
- In table 1 the phrase 'child and family preventive medicine' should be clarified.
- table 3: roman superscripts, but arabic footnotes.
- 'vaccine when age is 30 years' / 'vaccine when age is 50 years' is confusing: are these age boundaries?
- in the text describing these age-specific results, the same problem arises: "influenza vaccination of a young GP (30 years old)..."
- how was the age distribution of the participating GPs? (%<30, 30-40, 40-50, >50?)
- the discussion is extremely long
- vaccinating children of GP's could be worthwhile!
- it should be stressed that taking neuraminidaseinhibitors is only advisable in case of an epidemic

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**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**: No

**Declaration of competing interests**: I declare that I have no competing interests.