Reviewer's report

Title: Pneumonia and Influenza, and Respiratory and Circulatory Hospital Admissions in Belgium: A retrospective database study

Version: 1  Date: 15 March 2014

Reviewer: Ian Sheerin

Reviewer's report:

1. The authors do not pose a research question as such, but state that estimates of the burden of influenza disease are important in designing prevention and control measures. I agree with this statement and am happy with the way they have framed it.

2. The method that needs an essential clarification is how the costs are estimated. In the current draft, it is not clear if the Belgian hospitals report the actual cost of each admission. Or alternatively, have the authors estimated the cost of each admission using length of stay data? It is important that the exact method of estimating the costs is clarified.

3. Other methods appear appropriate.

4. The data appears to be valid and the authors have described any weaknesses in a satisfactory manner.

5. The manuscript shows acceptable standards of scholarship and reporting.

6. The discussion and conclusions are valid and contribute to knowledge of the burden of influenza disease. However, it would also be useful if the authors could state the average annual total admissions per year due to PI and RC, together with the range (lowest number to highest number) for the years covered by the data. In addition, it would be helpful if the authors could briefly discuss the Belgian government policy on flu vaccinations eg are they promoted or recommended for specific age groups? Are they free of charge for certain age groups? What were the data on flu vaccination coverage in Belgium in the 2002-2007 timeframe? This discussion could be brief but would help to explain the relevance and importance of the study findings.

The writing is to a high standard. I am happy with the title, although the abstract could be shortened to better emphasize the main conclusion.

Major compulsory revisions. There are none.

Minor essential revision. Please see point 2 above.

Discretionary revisions. Please see point 5 above.

There are no confidential comments to editors.

I recommend the manuscript be accepted after both of the above minor essential and discretionary revisions.

I suggest this article is important and there is a need to see more papers.
published with cost of disease data that can be used to inform policy decisions. The language in the paper is of an acceptable standard. The paper does not need to be reviewed by a statistician. I have no competing interests.
Dr Ian Sheerin PhD.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I have no competing interests