Reviewer’s report

Title: Risk factors of febrile respiratory illness due to viral infections in a semi-closed military environment: a case-control study

Version: 1 Date: 23 February 2015

Reviewer: Delphis Vera

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript describes clearly and concisely some risk factors for febrile respiratory illness in a semi-closed environment. The conclusions are well supported and address the specific scientific question. However, there are some observations related to study methodology.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Provide more detail on control selection, e.g. same-barrack, by-sex, age, symptom-onset?

2. Explain why risk factors, such as frequent hand washing, allergy, and military ranks were not considered.

3. State whether or not there were outbreak situations during the study period, and explain the effect of known control measures, such as respiratory hygiene and case isolation might have had on your passive surveillance data.

4. If outbreaks were detected during the study period, explain what consideration has been given to the fact that outbreak situations tend to alter the effect of known risk factors; e.g. regardless of age and or sex, during an outbreak, being next to an infected individual is a risk factor in itself.

5. Provide more detail on the statistical analysis performed, e.g. how covariates were added to the regression model; and the resulting power of each (regression) analysis conducted separately for each virus (decreased sample size may lead to decreased power).

6. Please, state the prevalence for FRI and each separate virus considered in your study, and explain the effect it may have on OR values as proxies to RR values.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. None.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Clarify the relationship between the study and the sentinel respiratory disease surveillance system. Did the sentinel surveillance include the questionnaire, or
was it a study “nested” in the sentinel system?

2. Explain how bacterial causes were excluded.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.