Reviewer's report

Title: Capacity building in national influenza laboratories - Use of laboratory assessments to drive progress

Version: 3  Date: 12 August 2015

Reviewer: Patrick Reading

Reviewer's report:

Johnson et al. report on the effectiveness of laboratory assessments performed using the International Influenza Laboratory Capacity Review tool developed by US CDC and APHL. Using this tool, 35 laboratories were assessed in 2010 and a series of recommendations made before laboratories were assessed a second time approximately 3 years later. This manuscript reports on the actions taken regarding recommendations from the 2010 assessment and uses WHO data regarding National Influenza Centre designation, External Quality Assessment Project participation and FluNet reporting to assess laboratory capacity independently of the tool. Overall, the study is clearly written and is of importance to those with interests in influenza surveillance, as well as in general capacity building in the context of other diseases. Minor editorial details are noted below.

Major compulsory revisions: None
Minor essential revisions: None
Discretionary revisions:
- please clarify where binomial exact test has been used and where the Student’s t-test has been used (in particular, where is the latter used?)
- consider rewording sentences on page 189-192, 209-212
- consider rewording sentences containing the following throughout the manuscript: laboratories’, laboratory’s, countries’, subjects’
- consider capitals for Ministry of Health and Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System
- consider use of commas throughout manuscript (e.g. in paragraph commencing line 172)

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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