Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation indicates that the Belgian Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance meets its objectives but can be optimized

Version: 1 Date: 24 May 2015

Reviewer: Masahito Yamada

Reviewer's report:

The authors describe the system and results of the Belgian CJD surveillance, including referral for autopsy in 48% of patients who died with suspected CJD on average. Descriptions of the surveillance in the country are important, however, there are some points to be elucidated or reconsidered:

1. Other pathological diagnoses than CJD in patients who died with suspected CJD.

   The authors described that 167 (55%) of 304 autopsied cases had the pathological diagnosis of CJD (lines 179-180). It is important to describe pathological diagnoses in 45% of the autopsied cases without CJD. What was the level of clinical diagnosis (probable/possible CJD) for these cases in which the diagnosis of CJD was suspected clinically and denied pathologically?

2. Capture of the 245 patients who died in hospital with CJD diagnosis by the surveillance system.

   According to the descriptions in lines 189-191, the reviewer understands that 127 (52%) of the 245 cases did not undergo autopsy, but 23 (9.8%) were captured by the surveillance system as probable cases. Was registration by the surveillance system rejected by the families in the remaining cases? Or, did some of them have other levels of CJD diagnosis such as “possible” after the surveillance?

3. Response rate to the survey (line 199)

   The response rate to the survey was 72 (14%) of 533 neurologists in Belgium. As the response rate is low, the reviewer wonders if the survey data represent the thought of Belgian neurologists.

4. The conclusion (lines 278-281)

   The reviewer feels that more reasons are necessary to conclude that vCJD cases are likely to be captured by the surveillance system.

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.