Reviewer's report

Title: Pilot to evaluate the feasibility of measuring seasonal influenza vaccine effectiveness using surveillance platforms in Central-America, 2012.

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Reviewer: Amparo Larrauri

Reviewer's report:

The authors present a very interesting study, with a crucial relevance for public health in the field of influenza vaccine effectiveness monitoring. The results provided in this pilot work has been proved extremely useful to explore if existing SARI platforms are able to evaluate a regional VE against SARI. As the authors stated, the lessons learned from this pilot have allowed the full implementation of the REVEL AC-i network in order to estimate influenza VE in the Americas each year.

In my opinion this article will influence in a very positive way in the performance of Revelac-i network and its internal organization in the future and therefore it deserves to be published and be available for future researchers and potential contributors of Revelac-i.

My main comment to this article is that I would have liked that the authors had presented influenza VE estimates, even if they were very imprecise. If the results by age group were not available, it would be desirable to present at least estimates for all population. If the authors decide not to present definitely those results, it should be desirable to add a comment in the discussion.

Discretionary Revisions

The vaccination campaign in November-December in Honduras coincides to the highest influenza activity of the year. Perhaps it would be desirable to discuss why the campaign is planned in this way in Honduras.

How did the EPI staff reach the information on dates of respiratory specimen collection? How the person collecting the specimen knows/keeps this information?

I appreciate the effort realized in this study by the surveillance staff for reviewing vaccination cards or other EPI data source to complete vaccination history. In my opinion, it should be emphasized the need to incorporate this variable as a mandatory/critical variable to ascertain during routine surveillance data collection. It would be very beneficial if this requirement is clearly included in the updated PAHO regional SARI surveillance guidelines. Please, consider to include an statement on this subject.

Minor Essential Revisions

In the Abstract in Methods is written “We sought children 6-59 months”. If the
study is in children younger than 9 years it would be up to 108 months. Please, revise the last sentence of Results in the Abstract (perhaps the word "and" is missing, or some rewriting of the sentence would be needed). If the study is restricted to population targeted for government-sponsored influenza vaccination, in each country, it should be explained clearer in Methods.

In Table 1 the coverage of seasonal vaccination in 2011 is shown for three countries. Would it be possible to provide vaccine coverage for the year 2012 of the VE study?

Table 1. Influenza vaccine coverage in Costa Rica: 2013 (2012?)

**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 declare that I have no competing interests