Reviewer’s report

Title: Meningococcal disease in Italy: public concern, media coverage and policy change

Version: 0 Date: 22 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?
Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: Meningococcal disease in Italy

Overall this is an interesting case study about how policy changes and attitudes towards a vaccine are interlinked.

The study works well linking together information about trends in media and in the public to put together a composite idea of what "society" thinks about the meningococcal vaccination program, relative to policy changes.
Some additional details about methodological decisions, and some more context about vaccines in Italy could be helpful for readers.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Paragraph 2 of the intro could use a bit of re-wording. You mention : meningococcal vaccines were not provided to adults." and then in 2016 a new co-payment system was started. What does that mean? Before 2016 how much did the vaccine cost and who paid for it? And then after 2016 how much did the vaccine cost and who (national government vs region vs individual) paid for it (did the cost go down or up for consumers?)

You mention several models in the introduction - the outside initiative model, cultural lag / the mobilization model - it is unclear if all of these are conceptually involved in your study design, or if you focus on one, but feel the need for whatever reason to introduce the others. You can change the last paragraph of your intro (page 4 line 39) to better reflect this. For example you could state:

"Using the mobilization model as a guide, we aimed to describe dynamics surrounding the decision made by …."  

or

"This study aimed to describe the dynamics of the decision made by ……and was able to test out if the mobilization model or outside initiative model better fit the data."

Methods (page 4 line 19): why did you exclude letters to the editor?

page 6: why did you do an analysis limited to 112 articles in the last 10 months instead of all 132?

It took me until the discussion to realize that you were measuring public attention through Google trends and media attention through an analysis of articles from leading newspapers. I recommend (briefly but explicitly) mentioning this point in the intro and/or methods.

A few things in particular are missing from the introduction / discussion. A bit more information on (young) adult vaccinations could be helpful. Do other vaccines (flu most notably, or diphtheria-tetanus(-pertussis) boosters) have high uptake and are widely accepted in this population?

Also - do colleges require meningococcal shots prior to matriculation? Or are they mandatory for any occupation?

And lastly - Europe is in the middle of a massive measles outbreak (https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/measles-notification-rate-million-population-
country-eueea-1-january-2018-31). I get that measles and meningitis aren't the same thing, but are there underlying currents of vaccine hesitancy which impact people's thoughts on this?

The language overall is fine, but a couple confusions. (As mentioned before), in the abstract, you write "the Lombardy Regional Authority changed its policy by offering co-payment to adults". I think you mean "requiring co-payment from adults" (the first way makes it sound like they are offering something new, the second way means they changed it and now require payment).

Other small things, too: many (American) English speakers would use the subjunctive on page 3 line 56 (If the model *were* true). But the way it is is fine.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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