Reviewer’s report

Title: A Clinical Prediction Rule for Diagnosing Human Infections with Avian Influenza A(H7N9) in a Hospital Emergency Department Setting

Version: 4 Date: 24 May 2014

Reviewer: Marianne A.B. van der Sande

Reviewer’s report:

I thank the authors for their clear and detailed reply to most of the comments raised, although it remains unfortunate that certain limitations could not be addressed (eg more comparable controls than historical; validation of the prediction rule in second wave) due to lack of data.

I would therefore still suggest that the conclusion in the abstract better reflects these limitations, in particular as apparently the simple decision rule the authors constructed based on the first wave would have been most useful for the second wave it, but was not used. Also, in the conclusion the authors now do no longer treat a new wave as hypothetical, but do not reflect on reasons for the absence of use of the rule?

Also, I was confused by the reply to my request for clarification of the tertiles. How was a tertile defined? Why were the cut-offs for the risk scores of the tertiles changed so much? Wasn't the lower cut off (76 originally) the cut off between low risk and high risk? Why does having many men with a score of 71 change that? How many people were in each tertile with these new cut-offs.

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