Reviewer’s report

Title: Clinical assessment is a neglected component of outbreak preparedness: evidence from refugee camps in Greece

Version: 0 Date: 04 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Nina Marano

Reviewer’s report:

Methods section refers to the case definitions used as being 'provided elsewhere', I recommend they be included in this paper, especially the ones used for respiratory illness to show what definitions were used, and what signs and symptoms should have been assessed. Especially important to show how case definitions for respiratory illness differ for persons age <5, vs age> 5. Methods should explain how the severity scoring systems that were used related to the case definitions.

A major indicator of infectious disease vulnerability is young age, yet only pregnancy and co-morbidity were considered. Authors state that median age was 19 years but do not give further details, other than some data in table 2. It would be good to provide an age breakdown of the 528 patient consultations to understand how many patients were under 5 years of age, and how many were under 1 year of age.

Authors mention the concept of 'alert threshold' for outbreak detection. For respiratory illness, it may not be possible to actually achieve an alert threshold. Surveillance is likely to be more sensitive to outbreaks of immediately notifiable diseases such as measles and leptospirosis, and diseases with relatively high CFRs such as typhoid than to more common diseases with a lower CFR such as ARIs. Perhaps a greater emphasis should be placed on detecting and responding to slower, steady increases in diseases with lower CFRs like ARIs, which nevertheless account for large proportional morbidity and mortality due to their high incidence.

I think that conclusions should reinforce and reiterate the importance of using standard case definitions and assuring that clinicians/caseworkers are adequately trained to use the case definitions consistently.

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.

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

Yes

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I am able to assess the statistics

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