Reviewer's report

Title: Verifying causes of death in Thailand: rationale & methods for empirical investigation

Version: 1 Date: 23 November 2009

Reviewer: Seval Akgün

Reviewer's report:

The study appears to have been well conducted and well defined and important to the development of appropriate policies and interventions in Thailand. The methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work. The discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data; on the other hand, there are some points that the authors should overview to make more understandable the study.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The article would need considerable editing to make it more easily readable for an English speaking audience
2. The authors specified 4 study objectives; however, the article includes only data about the distribution of the death causes. The results and the objectives are not concordant, some of the objectives of the article -especially the 4th, mentioned in page 8 might be long term objectives of the study.
3. The information about the Verbal Autopsy (VA) methodology isn't clear. There is no information when the data was collected. Usually it is suggested that the VA study take place as soon as possible following the death. The validity would be higher if the data are collected in as short a period as possible.
4. The other important problem besides time for VA studies is developing a
standard questionnaire. There is no information regarding questionnaire form in the article. Usually
the aim of VA is to diagnose deaths that have not been recorded by the routine reporting vital registration so the underlying and immediate causes of deaths can be differentiated using the standard questionnaires. The authors should explain the VA tools, data collection methods, standardization etc..clearly in the methodology part.
5. There is also no information on who collected the data. Was there any training, supervision for the interviewers?
6. The authors gave detailed information on the sampling methodology but this section is disorganized and difficult to follow, it requires to be rewritten to provide information more clear and brief.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
7. Table 1 and its explanation in the results section are actually should be given in the methods section. The data shown in Table 1 are not the findings of the study, the table gives detailed- visual- explanation of the deaths included to the study sample.
- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
8. There is a lot of repetitions all over the article, same issues are repeated in methods results and conclusion sections. The authors should try to make more precise and “easy to understand” the article.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare i have no competing interests.