The design of a survey questionnaire to measure perceptions and behaviour during an influenza pandemic: the Flu TElephone Survey Template (FluTEST).

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Authors' objectives
During the 2009–10 influenza (flu) pandemic, surveys to assess behaviour among the general public were designed quickly and suffered from methodological deficits as a result. To facilitate survey work in a future pandemic we (1) identified variables relating to behaviour, perceptions and presence of symptoms that were of relevance to policy-makers and other public health experts; (2) tested and refined the wording of questions to measure these variables; (3) assessed the reliability of responses to these questions; and (4) tested whether non-response bias due to attrition might prevent the use of a longitudinal design for future pandemic-related surveys.

Authors' conclusions
It would be ill-advised for public health bodies to enter the next pandemic without a plan for how to measure the public's behaviours and perceptions. The extensive set of items that we compiled as part of this work has the benefit of being evidence based, policy relevant and readily understood. Although choosing how to gather data still requires consideration, these items can be used with confidence as soon as the next pandemic begins. Future work should consider the most appropriate method for conducting surveys using these items.

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