Author's response to reviews

Title: The Geographic Distribution Patterns of HIV-, HCV- and Co-infections among Drug Users in a National Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program in Southwest China

Authors:

Yi-Biao Zhou (z_yibiao@hotmail.com)
Song Liang (songliang@ufl.edu)
Qi-Xing Wang (qwx2008@sina.com)
Yu-Han Gong (xq0082@163.com)
Shi-Jiao Nie (11211020008@fudan.edu.cn)
Lei Nan (nl67nn1113@163.com)
Ai-Hui Yang (10211020082@fudan.edu.cn)
Qiang Liao (liaqiang411@163.com)
Xiu-Xia Song (xxsong@fudan.edu.cn)
Qing-Wu Jiang (jiangqw@fudan.edu.cn)

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Dear Dr. Mirjam Kretzschmar and Miss Sheryl Ramos

Thanks you for letting us submit our third revision of “The Geographical Distribution of HIV-, HCV- and Co-infections among Drug Users in a National Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program in Southwest China” for consideration for publication in BMC Infectious Diseases. Many thanks for the editor’s comments. Following the comments, we have thoroughly revised the manuscript. Please find attached point-by-point responses to the editor’s comments. All changes were made in track-change mode in the Word document.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you very much for your assistance. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Kindest regards

Yibiao Zhou, PhD
School of Public Health
Fudan University
RESPONSES TO THE EDITOR’S COMMENT

We have received the revision of your manuscript. The Editor's comments are as follows:

"In my opinion, the authors did not sufficiently address the concerns of reviewer 1. The concern was that the clustering found with statistical methods has to do with the fact that HIV and HCV are transmissible infections, are transmitted via the same transmission routes and are therefore related by risk behaviour and clustered because of clustering of behavior, but also because of natural geographical boundaries between human populations. In their response letter the authors claim to have incorporated changes in this direction, but (a) the pages they refer to seem to be numbered differently, and (b) they only inserted 2 sentences in their entire manuscript concerning this issue.”

Response: Many thanks to the editor for his or her further and constructive suggestions. We are sorry that we did not provide the right location of revision. We supplemented the limitations of our analytic approaches in the discussion part as suggested by the editor and the reviewer (See Lines 7-17, Page 19). If there are any questions, please feel free to tell us, and then we will revise them. Thank the editor again. The revision is the following:

HIV and HCV are transmissible infections, and they often share similar transmission routes. Therefore, the clustering found with the spatial methods might be related to the clustering of risk behaviors, to natural geographic boundaries between human populations, or to both. However, due to the limitations of these analytic approaches (e.g., they did not consider HIV, HCV and co-infections as communicable diseases, and are limited in the ability to identify which reason may contribute to the clustering), we cannot analyze unambiguously what resulted in the clustering. In addition, the information regarding the use of condoms and sexual behaviors is not
available and individual risk factors were not considered in the framework of our geographic analyses. These limit the ability to further analyze why the geographic distribution of these infections in our study field was heterogeneous.