Author's response to reviews

Title: Prediction of posttraumatic stress disorder among adults in flood district

Authors:

- Peng Huang (officerhp@yahoo.com.cn)
- Hongzhuan Tan (tanhz99@qq.com)
- Aizhong Liu (laz@xysm.net)
- Shuidong Feng (fengshuidong@hotmail.com)
- Mengshi Chen (121444639@qq.com)

Version: 6 Date: 18 March 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Nina Titmus,

Thank you very much for your letter of March 1, 2010 requiring us to submit a revised version of the above mentioned manuscript again. Below are our specific responses to the reviewers’ comments and Editorial Board member’s assessment. All changes (including grammatical) in the manuscript have been highlighted red.

**Reviewer:** Anke Ehlers

**Comment:**
The authors have been responsive to the reviewers' comments. Thank you for clarifying that the DSM-IV criteria were used. It still is unclear on p.7 whether participants met the A2 criterion. It would be helpful if that was made explicit.

**Response:**
We have revised the statement on page 7, line 6 to provide more clarification on participants meeting the A2 criterion.

**Reviewer:** Cengiz Kiliç
Comment 1:
First, this is a study with a very big sample. We are told to believe that 25000 subjects were each phoned for appointments, all 25000 questionnaires were checked by one study supervisor (who ordered a re-interview when data were missing), each one of 25,000 survivors were seen in a separate room; all the assessment of demographics, other predictor variables and PTSD took 20 minutes. Add to this the fact that all interviews were done by 40 data collectors (650 interviews each). The authors also do not give any exclusion criteria. Were everyone in chosen household included? What about those who couldn't be interviewed? Or those who did not experience the floods?

Response 1:
Yes, it is true that 25,000 subjects were interviewed. However, it is worth mentioning that a total of 8 supervisors/coordinators (one in each county) checked the questionnaires. This has been clarified on page 7, line 15. The inclusion criteria (the opposite being exclusion criteria) have been stated on page 5, line 16-18. Reasons for not including 3,807 subjects in our analysis have been given on page 9, line 5-9.

Comment 2:
PTSD diagnosis cannot be made using questionnaires. The measure they have used is not an interview, but a questionnaire. You can only mention "probable PTSD rate" when using a questionnaire.

Response 2:
We agree with the comment, and have used "probable PTSD rate" instead of “PTSD rate” or “PTSD positive rate”. The use of questionnaires to diagnose PTSD has been discussed as a limitation of our study on page 12, line 13-16.

Comment 3:
The authors have excluded some potential predictors on the basis that they did not relate to PTSD in the initial univariate analyses. This is not appropriate. They should have based their decision on the existing literature. Almost all studies point to subjective experience (i.e. fear) during trauma as one of the strongest predictors of PTSD, the authors have not assessed that.

Response 3:
We only excluded variables such as economic loss, property damage, and family history of mental illness in the initial univariate analyses. We did not collect any direct information on fear as a subjective experience during trauma. We, however, considered subjects’ mental status before the flood (on page 8, line 9-12) to give a sense of subjective experience during trauma.

Editorial Board member

Comment:
I believe most of the reviewers comments have been satisfactorily responded. The remaining issue that a questionnaire administered by lay interviewers cannot make diagnosis of PTSD needs to be
properly dealt with all over the manuscript and especially emphasized as a limitation of the study in the discussion.

**Response**:

Thank you for your advice. The use of questionnaires to diagnose PTSD has been discussed as a limitation of our study. We have also used probable diagnosis of PTSD and not definitive diagnosis of PTSD in the manuscript.

We believe that we have adequately corrected the language and responded to the reviewers’ comments, and hope that our paper is now acceptable for publication in BMC.

Sincerely,

Peng Huang