Reviewer's report

Title: Knowledge and risk behaviors related to HIV/AIDS, and their associations with information sources among men who have sex with men in China

Version: 2 Date: 15 January 2010

Reviewer: Chris Archibald

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Several studies on HIV infections among men who have sex with men conducted in China have been published in international peer-reviewed journals, usually from large urban centers such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Guangzhou. The situation in middle sized/small cities/rural areas in Northern China where the current study was conducted is largely unknown, and so this paper helps to fill this gap in knowledge with a large sample and rich information. However, the results in this paper are presented in too much detail and there is not enough synthesis or summarizing of the results to help the reader understand the conclusions.

Table 1 is not necessary as the text summary of the table is sufficient to provide the readers with the demographic information of the sample. Similarly with Table 5: what is the value of so much information being presented to the reader? What is the take-away message? I think it would be more useful to the reader to present a summary of the important differences or important findings in tabular form, and the rest can be summarized in the text. For Table 4, there is way too much presented, most of it not statistically significant. For multivariate analysis results, just show the significant variables for each model while the other non-significant variables which were used for adjustment purposes only can be listed in a footnote or in the text without their individual specific results. That way the reader will focus on the main findings and not get lost in a huge table of mostly meaningless numbers.

More information should be provided in the Methods section about the cities that were studied. How big are they? Are there any clear differences between the cities in terms of ethnic composition, health services, standard of living, etc? This would help the reader interpret the study findings.

The writing needs to be clarified in some areas. For example, in the last paragraph of Abstract, why is there a mention of antivirus drugs preventing spread of HIV? This point is not mentioned anywhere in the body of the article.

- Minor Essential Revisions

In Table 3, the authors listed four outcomes which the first column (Ever have
had anal intercourse with a man in the past 6 months) and the second column
(Had anal intercourse with a male sex partner in the past 6 months) are the
same. Did the authors mean “Ever have had anal intercourse with a man in their
lifetime or in the past 5 years” in the first column. Please clarify.

The authors categorized education as “#1 education, 2 education, 3-4 education
and #5 education”. Did they mean “Years of schooling”? Please clarify.

For income, please specify if it is per month or per year, and what currency was
used here, i.e RMB or US dollars.

The results should not be presented by both yes and no in the tables since the
%no can be calculate from %yes.

- Discretionary Revisions
Nil

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

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 that I have no competing interests.