Author's response to reviews

Title: Work-related pesticide poisoning among farmers in two villages of Southern China: a cross-sectional survey

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Version: 3 Date: 18 May 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Responses to Reviewers’ Comments

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Version: 3 Date: May 18, 2011

Thank you for the reviewers’ and editor’s suggestions. We did have a native English speaking co-author copyedit the paper. Below is a point by point response to the reviewer concerns. We have not included those concerns adequately addressed in first revision.

Version: 2 Date: 17 April 2011 Reviewer: Yaser Issa

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. INTRODUCTION:
The authors responded successfully to all comments for introduction part (2 comments). But it will be better if the authors mentioned in the last paragraph of introduction as: "In this study we aimed to......", and omit the subsection "specific aims).

Response: We made this change.

2-1-3: In second paragraph, the second sentence, the author mentioned that the questionnaire was pretested (piloted): How this piloting was performed, by whom and how many persons interviewed and when (the exact date or period). Also did the persons who participated in piloting were re-interviewed in the formal study? Reviewer Response: The authors did not reply to this comment, just again (the questionnaire was tested). It is better to say the questionnaire was developed and piloted by the research team at the Southeast University School of Public Health .... Without mentioning personal names. Also no response to the comment if the piloted farmers again were interviewed in the formal study. Needed to be answered?

Response: We responded to this, but only in the reviewer response with the first revision. We have now moved that text to the manuscript itself.

“The questionnaire was developed by a research team at the Southeast University School of Public Health in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. Six graduate students from the Southeast University School of Public Health were trained as interviewers for this study. The research team at the Southeast University School of Public Health pilot tested the survey questionnaire in a small group of the target population in the study area in June 2009. Specifically, fifteen people from the two villages were interviewed; these fifteen pesticide applicators were re-interviewed in the formal study. Minor changes were made before the survey questionnaire was finalized.”
2-1-4: What kind of help given by the village leader in data collection? Reviewer Response: It is good but could we consider that the leader group as a focus group?!

**Response**: The leader group did not serve as a focus group. The village leaders helped to locate households, introduce the interviewers, and assist with communication when necessary. A focus group might be good for generating some general information about pesticides practice in that area. However, in order to calculate acute pesticides poisoning prevalence and identify risk factors, we believe that the face-to-face survey was the correct approach.

And it will be better if the authors keep (i.e., not to omit it) the paragraph talking about the controlling for confounding effects which show the basics for controlling for confounders (I recommend this).

**Response**: We added text about the specific confounders back into the text.

3. **RESULTS**

3-1. In the sixth paragraph of the Results mainly the 2nd sentence: author mentioned "after controlling for other variables" what were these variables? Also the same in the 3rd sentence of the same paragraph.

Reviewer Response: covariates which controlling was done for should be mentioned.

**Response**: The specific covariates are now listed.

Minor Revisions:

1-2. The last paragraph of the introduction could be as a separate paragraph starting with "the aims of this study....". Reviewer Response: It is ok now., but without subsection just start as in this study we aimed to.......”

**Response**: We made this change.

3. Results:

3-1: In the footnote of table 5, it is mentioned "Adjusted odds ratio..". Could the author mention adjusted for what variables.

Reviewer Response: footnotes for adjustment should be mentioned.

**Response**: We have added a footnote to Table 5 indicating that each AOR is adjusted for the other covariates listed in the table. For example, we adjusted for the effects of gender, age, education, study areas and safety knowledge when we reported the association between pesticide poisonings and the behavioral risk scores.

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

**Quality of written English**: Acceptable

**Statistical review**: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests**: I declare that I have no competing interests.

**Version**: 2 Date: 23 April 2011 **Reviewer**: Kishore G GnanaSam
Minor Essential Revision
Ref(Methods Last line)(Page 10:Line 10,11). The authors have adopted a positive hypothesis and later disprove their hypothesis by using a critical p value (line 3 page 11). Therefore there exists a controversy with the critical p value (page 11; Line 3) and the hypothesis. Ideally the research work should adopt a null hypothesis, and disprove the same using a critical p value. Please review the research hypothesis appropriately.

Response: We revised how we stated specific aim 2 to clarify that we were examining associations between application methods and pesticide poisoning. For the statistical tests employed, our null hypothesis is that there is no association between poisoning and potential factors. We utilized the $\chi^2$ test to examine associations between poisoning and the following factors: gender, age, education, geographic area, types of safety knowledge, application methods, and specific personal protection behaviors. We utilized logistic modeling to examine associations between poisoning and the following factors: gender, age, education, geographic area, having safety knowledge, and a risk score.

2. (Background line 7): The text pertaining to references 3 and 4 is missing (deleted) It is recommended to retain the text since the information from Asian developing countries are important too.

Response: We add that text and its citations.

Discretionary
1) one of the limitations of this study is that the investigators did not directly monitor the practice and behavior of the respondents. Kindly mention this in the limitations.

Response: We have now noted this in the manuscript text.

2) In Table 2: The authors are requested to re-arrange the toxic symptoms in order of decreasing prevalence for a better picture.

Response: We have made that change and agree that is a helpful way of presenting the data.

3) Table 1 describes the demography and this data is repeated in tables 3. Due to page restrictions and repetition of data, it is recommended that table 1 may be removed and the statistical differences mentioned in the result texts.

Response: This is a good advice. We deleted Table 1, adjusted table number, and made changes in the text accordingly.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests