Author's response to reviews

Title: The Growth in Newspaper Coverage of Tobacco Control in China, 2000-2010

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We thank the reviewer’s valuable comments. The reviewer’s comments are shown in italics for easy reference, with our responses shown below the comments.

C = comment; R = reply

Reviewer: Yu Liu

Reviewer's report:

The authors studied the growth of news coverage about tobacco control in China newspapers from 2000 to 2010 based on Chinese Newspaper Database. They found that the issues about tobacco control were increasingly reported in Chinese newspapers in the past ten years, but still was lower than international level. It suggests more attention should be paid for the reports of tobacco control in newspapers in the future. The manuscript is well written and statistically analyzed. Though a previous study has studied this issue, the authors have several new findings in the light of their strong standard on the materials. But, there are some major problems which need be revised in the manuscript as followed:

C1: Page 2, In conclusion of Abstract: “coverage remains low by international benchmarks”, what is “international benchmarks” and the author should provide the related reference or supportive data in the manuscript.

R1: It means that the coverage is still lower than the studies of newspaper
coverage in other nations (ref19-21). So we have now revised the sentence into:

“Chinese newspapers are giving increasing attention to tobacco control, but coverage remains lower than international level.”

C2: Page 3, “A total of 1149 articles published in 102 continually published newspapers were thus located and analyzed.” The list of 102 continually published newspapers should be provided as supplementary materials of this manuscript. Furthermore, how about the distribution of these newspaper based on their located provinces?

R2: The CNKI Company provided us with the list of continually published newspapers, but some newspapers have not English names. We have provided it as supplementary material. Because the aim of the current paper is not to analyze the location distribution, so we did not analyze the location distribution, but the provided list includes detailed information about it.

C3: Page 4, 2.3 Type of article: what did the authors based on to classify these newspapers into three types?

R3: we classify all newspaper into three types based on Ref 4 and Ref 16. In order to make the classification more comprehensible, we have revised the sentences into:

“Articles were classified into three types [4, 16]: (1) news stories (a factual account of an event or issue); (2) editorials (a nonfactual
account=opinion of an event or issue written by newspaper staff); (3) letters to the editor (usually written to the newspaper by a member of the community)."

C4: Page 5, 3. Results: “From 2000 to 2004, an average of just 36 articles ……..And in 2010, 271 articles were published (Table 1).” Do the author’s results be consistent with the Liu Y’s results, or not?

R4: The results are consistent with Liu Y’s results. We have added some comments in the discussion section of revised manuscript.

C5: Page 5, 3. Results: “Similarly, there was a significant difference in the number of articles ……….both being higher than in other months (Figure 1).” A similar finding has been reported in Liu Y’s publications. The authors were advised to introduce this point.

R5: Yes, this finding is similar to some previous studies including Liu Y’s study. We have discussed this point in the revised manuscript as following:

“As has been reported in other studies of the impact of special days focused on tobacco control[11, 23, 24] can generate spikes in media attention to tobacco control. However, when the year round coverage of tobacco control related issues is low as it is in China, concerns arise when journalists concentrate this coverage around just one day and publish relatively few stories during the rest of the year. Days like World No Tobacco Day can be important conduits for news attention, but they can
also send an unfortunate message that attention to tobacco control is not a mainstream news area.”

Ref 11 is Liu Y’s study.

C6: Page 8, Discussion: “In China, mass media function more as propaganda tools than as information servers. In this context, there are considerable challenges in how best to frame tobacco news if it is to be deemed acceptable by news gatekeepers.” This paragraph is based on the subjective view of the authors and obviously is the lack of the evidence. The part should be deleted.

R6: Thank you for your good suggestion. This paragraph has been deleted in the revised manuscript.
We thank the reviewer’s valuable comments. The reviewer’s comments are shown in italics for easy reference, with our responses shown below the comments.

C = comment; R = reply

Reviewer: Gonghuan Yang

Reviewer's report:

Comments for “The Growth in Newspaper Coverage of Tobacco Control in China, 2000-2010”

In a social-environmental public health approach, interventions that change public and private tobacco use policies are among the most powerful interventions available to tobacco control advocates. The paper is very interesting to review the growth in newspaper coverage of tobacco control in China. But there are some issues need to be improved.

C1: The first paragraph of the methods, author did not introduce the database of Chinese Important Newspapers, such as how many newspaper to be included for each year, which is a basic massage. Based on the introduction, the database cover more than 500 newspapers, 7.95 million papers, cover 168 topics and 3600 subgroup. How to search, authors need to introduce in detail.

R1: we have introduced the database in detail. And all searches are with Chinese and English expansion. Furthermore, not all newspapers were indexed in 2000; the number of newspapers indexed in the database has
increased continually, which may confound the analysis of the growth of newspaper coverage. So we only searched news articles from 185 newspapers indexed continuously from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2010. We have provided the list of 185 continually indexed newspapers as supplementary material for the revised manuscript.

**C2:** The second, the key words are a few, only including smoking, cigarettes, tobacco and tobacco prohibition. I suggested focused the mains agenda on the MPOWER tobacco control strategies recommended by WHO and expanded key words for search#

I give the Table for searching strategy as reference

**R2:** After referring to the previous studies (ref11 and ref24), we used smoking, cigarettes, tobacco, tobacco control, tobacco free and tobacco prohibition as key words. Burrelle’s estimates that “tobacco” “cigarettes” and “smoking” can capture at least of 85% of items related to the search criteria (refer to Burrelle’s Information Service. Press clipping service coverage profile. Livingston, New Jersey: Burrelle’s Information Service, 2000.), so we considered the key words captured almost all of the newspaper articles. Of course, it is a good choice to use the MPOWER tobacco control strategies as key words. But we cannot see the Table for searching strategy as reference; if possible, we can try to search again in order to compare which one is more applicable.

**C3:** It is fine for Coding that covering topics, type point of view and
origin of article. I suggested give a case, how to coding for one paper, then how to form database for tobacco control. By the way, these is a small print mistake: 2.2 tobacco control topics.

**R3:** We apologize for the typo. We have added some sentences in the coding section and given an example of coding.

“2.3 Type of article

Articles were classified into three types [4, 16]: (1) news stories (a factual account of an event or issue); (2) editorials (a nonfactual account=opinion of an event or issue written by newspaper staff); (3) letters to the editor (usually written to the newspaper by a member of the community).

2.4 Point of view

Point of view--or slant -- which denotes the overall tone of the article [5, 17], was categorized into: (1) Pro-tobacco Articles that would be understood by such a person as conveying a view of smoking as in some way positive, relatively unimportant compared to other issues, or which were critical of laws, policies and individuals advocating restricting or opposing smoking; (2) Anti-tobacco Articles judged as being likely to be read by a person favorably disposed toward smoking control, as enhancing the general view that smoking and those institutions, interests, laws and policies that support it are undesirable; (3) Neutral/balanced. A neutral or balanced article was one either made no value judgments about tobacco use or control, or else provided a clear balancing of such
judgments.”

**C4:** For 2.6 Statistical Analysis, authors did not describe indicators, only mentioned the frequency of articles. Besides the raw frequency of articles, the author adds the relative (percentage) frequency.

**R4:** We have added relative frequency in all figures and tables as the reviewer suggested.

**C5:** The results just the number of article related to tobacco use, in fact, authors has coded the topic, BUT the authors did not report the results, the so authors should analyze the different topic, such as protect people from SHS exposure, of increasing cigarettes tax and prices.

**R5:** in fact, we have analyzed relationship article types and tobacco control topics, and the relationship article origins and tobacco control topics as following:

“Overall, 908 articles (79%) featured in national newspapers and 241 (21%) were published on local newspapers. There was a significant difference in the topics between the two article origins ($\chi^2=24.094$, df=8, p=0.002). So we conducted standardized residual analysis to identify what was driving this significant result. The national newspaper articles reported more on warning(27.0%) and enforcement(10.1%); less on monitoring(9.7%) and protection(23.8%), while the local articles reported more on monitoring(15.8%), protection(29.0%); less on warning(19.1%) and enforcement(5.0%).”

“There were 590 news stories (51.3%), 247 editorials (21.5%), 312 letters to the editor (27.2%). We found a significant association between tobacco control topic and article type ($\chi^2=190.353$, df=16, p<0.001). Standardized residual analysis indicated that news stories were more likely than expected focus on monitoring (18.8%) or smoke free activity (15.9%) and less likely to focus on enforcement(5.3%); editorials were more likely than expected to focus on enforcement(15.4%), youth access(9.3%) or programs and campaigns(6.1%), and less likely to concern smoke free activity(3.6%) or monitoring(4.9%). Letters to the editor were more likely than expected to concern warning(33.0%), enforcement(8.0%) or raising taxes(9.0%), and
less likely to concern monitoring (1.0%) or programs and campaigns (0.6%). There were only 77 articles (6.7%) published on the front page. These focused on protection (37.7%) and monitoring (15.6%) and warning (13.0%).”

If we report these results in tables, we need add another 2 tables. There will be 4 figures and 3 tables; we think it may be too many for the paper.

So we did not report these results in figures or tables. If they are necessary, we can add 2 tables for these results.