Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 23 December 2011

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:

1. 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.

2. 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?

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

4. 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?

5. 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.

6. 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.

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.