Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with suicidal behaviors in mainland China --- a meta-analysis

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Version: 2 Date: 24 April 2012

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Prof Jukka Hintikka,

We do appreciate your consideration of our manuscript and suggestions. We had many thanks to the reviewers for their kind comments and suggestions. We revised our manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions and answered their questions point by point (we added them in the second page). We also finished all of the editorial changes according to the requirement. We asked for help with language from the Edanz (www.edanzediting.com/bmc1). Thank you again!

Best wishes
Yours sincerely
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Response to reviewers
Reviewer's report
Title: Factors Associated with Suicide and suicidality in Mainland China: A Meta-Analysis
Version: 1 Date: 31 March 2012
Reviewer: yu yizhen
Reviewer's report:
The manuscript presented systematic review and Meta-analysis on factors associated with suicidality in mainland China. The results of this paper might be useful information in suicide prevention. However, there are several areas where the paper needs to be clarified and edited, which I have highlighted below:

1, The title “Factors associated with suicide and suicidality in mainland China: A meta-analysis”, need to be clarified, can the authors explain what difference between suicide and suicidality?
---Thank you for your good question. Suicide refers to completed suicide, suicidality include behaviors of having suicide ideation and attempted suicide.(Liu X, Tein JY, Zhao Z, Sandler IN. Suicidality and correlates among rural adolescents of China. J Adolesc Health. 2005 Dec;37(6):443-51). In order to better understanding, we replaced “suicide and suicidality” with “suicidal behaviors” according to suggestion from reviewer 2.
2, The Abstract section: the form of the abstract is poor. The section should be written according by the guideline of the J, including Background, Methods, Results, and Conclusion.
---Thank you very much for your good suggestion. We have added Methods in the abstract.
3, Introduction: at the third of the section, the author wrote“ many studies have ...... ”, can the author give more examples except the demographic factors? As I seen from the discussion, the author only found the demographic factors in the present study is different from the previous study; I want to know whether there is other aspects on risk factors to suicide were reported inconsistent. Only more examples were given, can the sense of this manuscript were reflected, because meta-analysis are often used to solve controversial issue, and as the author wrote that there were the national data on suicide, it is not necessary to synthetize data by using meta-analysis.
----Thank you for your good questions. Except for demographic factors, studies on family type and suicide ideation, physical illness and suicide ideation and
attempted suicide, relationship with family and attempted suicide, were inconsistent too. As for the national data (Zhang J, Jing J, Wu XY, Sun WW, Wang CT: A Sociological Analysis of the Decline in the Suicide Rate in China. Social Sciences in China 2011; 5:97-113), it is the distribution of suicide among demographic factors, our pooled results related to demographic factors in our meta-analysis is consistent with this report.

4, Method: the authors need to describe more clear on literature search, such as “keyword”, “subject terms”, and "time limited" “population limited” etc, so others can repeat this process.

---Thank you for your good suggestion. In fact, we had this content in the manuscript at first draft, but we deleted them in order to concise the manuscript. But we found it is necessary according to your suggestion, we added them in the revised version.(please see the method section, page 6)

5, Method: the author need to clarify which effects model (fixed-effects models or random-effects models) were used when data synthesis were conducted.

---Thank you for your good suggestion again. We also deleted this part when we polish the manuscript, we agreed with you that we should had this part in the manuscript, therefore we added them in the revised manuscript. (If there was no significant heterogeneity (P>0.10 or p#0.10, but I²<50%), a fixed effects model was used to pool the data. If significant heterogeneity (p#0.10, I² >50%) was found between studies, the meta-analyses were conducted by a random effect model.)

6, As I known, publication bias are common in meta-analysis, however, the author don't analysis the publication bias. I believe that the author did not do the funnel plot analysis, because in the “Discussion” the author wrote that “bias MAY have been introduced…”

---Thank you very much! We did agree with you. We should consider the publication bias in meta-analysis, particularly RCT. We did consider this problem, we had the funnel plot analysis, but we did, not report them in the results. We did found publication bias since non-published data, non-English papers and paper without full text were not included in the systematic review. Thank you for your reminding, we should not use MAY in the discussion. We deleted MAY.

7, Parts of the “Results” section can be left out, such as the literature screen process, but the subgroup figures need to be added.

---Thank you for your good suggestion. We shortened the results section and added figures for subgroup analysis.

8, The “discussion” need to deepen discussed. In this section, the authors not only need to compare their own results with previous study, but also they need to try to explain the results. Such as why the suicide rate of female was higher than that of male before 2000, etc.

---Thank you for your good suggestions. We added some discussion according
The whole paper need a thorough grammar check and editing. For example, the references number in the article don’t have a centralized from, and the whole paper need to be revised by a native speaker to correct the syntax errors.

---Thank you. We asked for help with language from the Edanz (www.edanzediting.com/bmc1).

Reviewer 2
Reviewer's report
Title: Factors Associated with Suicide and suicidality in Mainland China A Meta-Analysis
Version: 1 Date: 7 April 2012
Reviewer: Paul Yip
Reviewer's report:
Review comments
TITLE:
The term “suicidality” is a vague description of what the authors have examined. It is suggested they replace this term with something more specific, for example, “suicidal ideation”, or replace the phrase “suicide and suicidality” with “suicidal behavior”.

---Thank you for your very nice suggestion. We replaced the phrase “suicide and suicidality” with “suicidal behaviors”.

ABSTRACT:
The use of article in phrase “risk factors for suicide” at several points in the abstract is incorrect; it needs to be replaced with “risk factors of suicide”.

---Thank you for your help with correcting this phrase.

INTRODUCTION:
1. Second para, line 3 that says “It also has long been recognized that the suicide pattern in China was very different from that in Western countries.” is grammatically incorrect in flow of tenses; it is suggested to be changed to “The suicide patterns of China have long been recognized as different from the West”.

---We do appreciate your help with this sentence.

2. Second para, line 4 saying “That is to say, female had higher suicide rate than male in China” needs to be “Female populations have consistently higher suicide
rates than males”.
---Thank you very much for your good suggestion. We changed it
3. line 5 should have an article at the beginning, i.e. “A recent report announced
the suicide rate…”
---Thank you for your suggestion, it do need reference, we added it now.
4. line 6 should be “…at the national level it has decreased by 2/3rds”
---Thank you, we changed this sentence according to your nice suggestion.
5. line 7; the expression “contrarily” does not fit the expression of the sentence.
Are the authors saying the male-female pattern has reversed over time? If so, the
sentence needs to be clearly stating this.
--------Thank you for identifying this mistake. Yes, we just mean the male-female
pattern has reversed over time. We rewrite this sentence.
6. Third para, line 1 “Though suicide rate decreased a lot, it still threatened health
of youth and the elderly in China.” – the sentence structure needs to be formal
and grammatically corrected.
----Thank you for identifying this mistake, we rewrite this sentence.

METHODS
1) In ‘Search strategy’ the authors talk about hand-searching journals but do not
mention any details. Since the majority readership may not be familiar with CNKI
and VIP it would be useful to explain them a little. Were there any other
databases/journals available to the authors? Why were these two particularly
selected for the review?
---Thank you for your good questions. Hand searching included printed journals.
As for CNKI and VIP, they are two very important databases for Chinese
journals. This review is about the risk factors of suicidal behaviors in mainland
China, so some articles were published in Chinese, we fond these full text by
these databases. In order to better understanding, we explained a bit in the
revised manuscript, we hope it is much better now.

2) In search strategy, the authors need to enlist the exact phrases and terms
used in searching for the articles.
---Thank you for your good suggestion. We added the specific search strategy in
the revised manuscript (please seeing page6)

3) In selection of studies, the authors express inclusion of studies from the
‘general population’. However, there are 2 studies in the review taken from
hospital populations.
---Thank you for your question. We only had one study (reference 42) with
participants from hospitals, but these patients are not patient with psychopathic
problem. In order to better understanding, we described them as “patients without psychopathic problem” in the table 1.

4) Who rated the quality of the articles? The authors need to explain this.
---Thank you for your suggestion. The second author rated the quality of the articles; we added this information in the revised manuscript

5) The section on assessment of heterogeneity needs to be worded in a better and clearer way.
---Thank you for your suggestion, we checked this part very carefully and asked the help with language edition. We hope it is much better and clearer now.

RESULTS
1) Figure 1 shows that 38 articles were excluded because full text was not available. What were the difficulties the authors faced in retrieving full text versions?
---Thank you very much for your questions. We can not get these full texts through the database in our library, we also tried to contact the authors, but we failed to get them.

2) Figures on forest plots of risk factor studies – spelling error for legends of figures 2-4; ‘frost plots’ should be ‘forest plots’
---Thank you very much, please forgive us for these mistakes.

3) Can figures 2-4 be converted to tables for the main article and forest plots be provided as extension files?
---Thank you for your question. we did had the information of figure 2-4 in the table 2, in order to describe these results more vividly we added these figures, do you think it is necessary to deleted them in the main text? If yes, we just deleted them, thank you.

DISCUSSION
1) The term ‘suicidality’ needs to be replaced with suicidal behavior or suicidal ideation.
---Thank you suggestion. We replaced ‘suicidality’ with suicidal behavior.

2) Since psychiatric disorders / psychological problems have been shown to be significant contributors to suicide risk in China, the authors need to describe how these disorders were measured in the included studies; what kind of assessments were common and what could be the limitations and future recommendations for Chinese populations.
---We do appreciate your good suggestion. We described the way to measure mood disorder in the present studies and give recommendation for the future study.(please seeing page14 )