Reviewer’s report

Title: The prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among female sex workers from different categories of sex work venues in China

Version: 1 Date: 30 July 2012

Reviewer: Ning Wang

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Major Compulsory Revisions

# Justification: the study is set up on the premise that most past research on STI in this population focuses on HIV and syphilis, but no clear justification is given for how and why research on CT and NG are necessary and what such research can be expected to add to the field.

# Biological interpretation: there is little to no discussion of the relative transmissibility of these various pathogens and the role that coinfection might play in explaining the observed cross sectional results. It is rather wasteful of the rich data not to do further analysis and interpretation of the interplay between the four different STIs.

# The stated implications for future disease control efforts are non-specific and poorly linked to the findings of the analysis. First, the need for better CT and NG surveillance must be justified, at the very least by highlighting the importance of reducing their disease burden. Second, these findings can also likely be reframed as additional insight into what is currently understood about HIV and syphilis risk in this population.

# FSW as “source population”: many researchers refer to FSW as the source population for STI in the general community. While there may be good reason to believe that this may be true in some places, it appears presumptive to make such statements based on cross-sectional data. At the least such claims should be backed by credible references; if none can be found I suggest removing such sentences.

Minor Essential Revisions

# Introduction: in the first sentence, it would help to point out that heterosexual contact is the major (dominant?) mode of transmission IN THAT it makes up the largest portion of all HIV infections relative to other modes.

# Introduction: the statement “FSW...are likely to determine how fast the HIV epidemic will spread from high risk group to the general population” needs to be backed by at least one original reference.

# Methods: in the opening sentence, the nature of the study (name, time, purpose, etc.) should be referenced.

# Results: in the sub-section “prevalence of infection” the HIV prevalence 0.26%
is missing the “%.”

# Results: the interpretation that syphilis prevalence increases with age might need to be requalified given the broad overlap of the 95% CI that in some cases include the next estimate.

# Results: under “risk factors for infection” the outcome of the analyses are unclear. It is also unclear as to why multivariate analysis results are only shown for syphilis and Chlamydia.

# Results: in the sentence beginning “In contract” should probably be “In contrast”

**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.