Reviewer’s report

Title: The characteristics of and high risk behaviors among non-injected heterosexual methamphetamine users in Qingdao, Shandong province, China

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Reviewer: Na He

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Reviewer’s comments on BMC Public Health Manuscript:

This was an interesting study by providing some pilot data on MA use in China. It is also timely given that MS use is rapidly increasing in this country. However, this manuscript can be improved by some major and minor revisions.

Major compulsory revisions:

A. “Introduction”
   (1). Last sentence of the first paragraph: should clearly mention that this was a global estimate of the number of users.
   (2). Last paragraph: Not logically coherent.

B. “Results”
   (1). How many or what proportion of female participants were sex workers?
   (2). I would suggest the authors examine correlations between MA use (e.g., debut, time and frequency of MA use, etc.) and risk sexual behaviors such as non-condom use, engaging in multiple sex per MA use, by controlling for potential confounding variables such as gender.

C. “Discussions” and “Conclusions”
   (1). The authors stated that they investigated the reasons of MS use. However, no any data about such important issue were presented. Therefore, the first and second sentences in the second paragraph of the “Discussion” session were irrelevant or not supported.
   (2). As stated by the authors that they did STI/HIV testing for the participants but would report the testing results in another paper, this, together with the above mentioned no thorough and careful examinations of the correlations between MS use and risky sexual behaviors, significantly down-valued the present paper.

Minor essential revisions:

A. There were many grammatical errors which should be corrected.

B. “Methods”
   (1). 2.4 Statistical analysis: The statement “Descriptive statistics were performed using chi-square and t-tests” is not correct. The chi-square and t-tests are
statistical not descriptive analyses.

C. “Results”
(1). Line 3 of the first paragraph: There was a typo, “females were more likely to be singe (should be ‘single’)”.
(2). For table 4, it would have been more informative if the results had been presented by categorizing these continuous variables into categorical variables and by providing frequencies of each categories of the variables, in addition to the present presentation of means and standard deviations.
(3). Since males and females were different in many aspects including demographic characteristics, perception or know of MA use and STD/HIV, MA use and sexual behaviors, it is worthy to examine whether gender difference in risk sexual behaviors was due to demographic characteristics or MA use or both and whether gender difference in MA use was due to any of demographic characteristics, i.e., why were there gender differences in risky sexual behaviors and MA use.

D. “Discussions” and “Conclusions”
(1). Given that the study sample was a convenient not random sample (i.e., potential selection bias) and only MA users were recruited, it should be cautious and conservative to make the conclusions.
(2). The first paragraph of the “Discussions” session especially the statements in line 5 to line10 are not supported by the data and by any references.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'