Author's response to reviews

Title: Smoking, cessation and expenditure in low income Chinese: cross-sectional survey

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Only one reviewer made further comments so all responses below refer to the comments of Xinguan Chen, who we thank for his useful comments and the amount of time he must have spent reviewing our paper.

1. We were very aware of the age differences and this is why we compared current and heavy smoking in men by four different age groups (Table 3) and why we controlled for age in the regression analysis. (Table 5) When comparing across the three groups, after stratifying by age, migrants still have lower rates of smoking and rural residents highest.

2. We draw very tentative comparisons with other studies drawing attention to the differences in sample populations between studies which make it difficult to draw conclusions about trends (page 13-14). In the limitations we re-iterate the point that inferences about the wider population should be made with caution.

3. We have been very careful in saying that smoking "may have peaked" (abstract) and "may be decreasing " (Page 14) precisely for the reason that the reviewer states. We the prevalence of smoking is still high (page 13) and we note the "worrying" high rates of heavy smoking especially in rural areas. (page 15) We don't think the possible decline detracts from the main concern about the high rates, which put Chinese men among the heaviest smokers in the world. We think that the evidence for possible decline is important and should be highlighted.

4. To strengthen our point about late uptake of smoking in China we have added references and a note about our own finding that smokers say they take-up smoking relatively late.

We agree that the term low income Chinese is imperfect- but it does describe the three groups in one term. The two major excluded groups are the urban unemployed and the elderly. The term, however, is widely used when comparing groups in relation to smoking behaviours and frankly we can't think of any better all-encompassing term.

5. We think that the definition of current and moderate/heavy smoking belongs where it is in the analysis section because these definitions were made at the analysis stage. The definition for attempting to quit appears twice, the second time in the results and this one has now been removed. (Page 11)

6. We think the analysis of expenditure is very straightforward and doesn't warrant any extra explanation in the analysis section.

7. We have clarified this point about quitting (Page 10)

8. The point of the three groups as stated in the methods is their residence status ie permanent urban, permanent rural, migrant with rural residency but living in the city for work.

9. We believe that most journals now prefer the use of exact P-values.

10. Tables 2 and 4 cannot be combined because Table 2 includes the whole study population and Table 4 includes only male current smokers.