Author's response to reviews

Title: All-cause mortality and risk factors in a cohort of retired military male veterans, Xi'an, China: an 18-year follow up study

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Author's response to reviews:

24 July, 2007

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Re: BMC-Public Health 3361312211317523 Reviewer's comment

"All-cause mortality and risk factors in a cohort of retired military male veterans, Xi'an, China: an 18-year follow up study"

Many thanks for your letter of 4 July 2007. We are pleased to receive the comment. Our responses to the reviewer’s comment are shown below. We have answered the comment and have made the amendments accordingly to it.

Firstly, the full name of the ethics committee is "The committee for medical ethics of the Chinese PLA General Hospital".

Reviewer's comment:

Title: All-cause mortality and risk factors in a military retired men cohort, Xian, China: an 18-year follow up study

Version: 4 Date: 28 March 2007
Reviewer: Lydia Bazzano

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is an interesting and timely report of risk factors for all-cause mortality in a prospective military cohort of Chinese men.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) The introduction section is not clear. The sentences from "In the world..." to "...June 30th, 2005" need to be revised to clearly present the reasons for conducting the study.

Reply: We agree.

In Page3, We have deleted "Among the 58 million deaths in the world" in Paragraph1 to make it laconic and added two questions in the fourth line to reinforce the reasons for conducting the study," Two questions remain to be resolved: one was "which diseases had a huge burden among retired military veterans?" the other was "how to prevent them?"

2) Significant English-language editing is necessary throughout the manuscript for errors and unusual uses of words.

Reply: We agree.

We have already asked Bernard C.K. Choi, a native English-speaking specialist to check and modify the whole manuscript for errors and unusual uses of words. This is the latest version. And We have proofread it again. If it still have some problems according to the format of BMC-PH for publication please let us know as soon.

3) More detail is required in the Methods section. For instance, was blood pressure measured once, or the average of three measures? Was weight measured in clothing? Were existing diseases self-reported or direct diagnoses? Self-report will usually lead to an underestimate of the disease in question.

Reply: We agree.

We describe the measurements of blood pressure and weight, methods of how to diagnose existing diseases in the methods section in detail.

The measurement of blood pressure is described in the first line of Paragraph3 in the Baseline Measurements. "Two blood pressure recordings were obtained from the right arm of patients in a sitting position after 30 minutes of rest; measurements were taken in 5-minute intervals, and mean values were calculated."

The measurement of weight and methods of how to diagnose existing diseases are described in the first line of Paragraph2 in the Baseline Measurements. "Existing diseases included coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, hypertension,
diabetes, COPD and cancer, which were diagnosed by local hospitals. Height was measured in meters (without shoes), and weight in kilogram (with heavy clothing removed and 1 kg deducted for remaining garments)."

And we also add the definition of drinking, which is described in Paragraph 5. "Current drinking was defined as average alcohol consumption of more than 10 g of absolute alcohol per day for more than 1 year in the past 5 years."

4) Methods section - Rather than presenting several paragraphs with the basic outline, subheadings such as "Study Population", "Baseline Measurements", "Follow-up" and "statistical Analysis" should be used. References need to be given for any questionnaires that were validated or have been used previously. Better descriptions of each questionnaire must be provided.

Reply: We agree.

We have revised the format and content of methods section according to the suggestions. Subheadings such as "Study Population", "Baseline Measurements", "Follow-up" and "statistical Analysis" are used respectively. The corresponding content of each part was adjusted and reinforced. The questionnaire were designed and defined using the WHO MONICA criteria[1]some definitions could be seen in the previous published paper[2]. Descriptions of each questionnaire are reinforced.

How to make them clearer is also under our consideration. Sequences of sentences are adjusted in the Baseline Measurements respectively.


5) Results section - A description of the results which are demonstrated in the tables and figures should be included in the results section. For instance, the second paragraph of the results section states that Table 1 shows population characteristics by smoking status at baseline in 1987. Please include a description of the data as well.

Reply: We agree.

We added the description content of Table1 in Paragraph 3 of the results section and adjusted the orders of tables and figures. "Age, BMI, diastolic, systolic, total cholesterol, triglycerides, existing disease including stroke, hypertension, diabetes, COPD and cancers between two groups had no significant differences (P>0.05). 64.89% and 59.20% of ever smokers exercised and drank regularly, which were higher than never smoker's (P<0.05). Prevalence of CHD in ever smokers (29.89%) was higher than never smoker's (23.71%)."

6) The discussion appears to be both lengthy unfocused. For instance, the entire
5th paragraph reviews the relationships between BMI and risk of various causes of mortality. This 10 line paragraph ends with one line pertaining to the present cohort stating that the relationship between BMI and death should be further studied in this cohort.

Reply: We agree.

In the 5th paragraph, "In China, another study got the similar result, i.e. underweight were associated with an increased risk of death in middle-aged men who had never smoked cigarettes" is transferred to the 6th paragraph to make it focused.

In the 11th paragraph, "Relationships among risk factors would be clearer with the increased follow up time and larger death numbers." is deleted to make it laconic.

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Minor Essential Revisions

1) There is a typo in the first line of the third paragraph beginning, "According to the standard of WHO..." I believe the date 1978 should be 1987?

Reply: After our verification, we are sure it should be in 1978[1].


2) There is a typo in the first line of the results section, "Up to Jun 30 ..." The month is spelled incorrectly and should read "June".

Reply: Yes, it should be "June".

3) There are many typos in the Tables. For example in Table 1, for Ever smokers under Existing disease, the % saying Yes to CHD seems to be 263% which is greater than the total possible 100%. The same is true of COPD and Hypertension in that column.

Reply: We agree.

We have revised the typos we could find in Table 1. For example, there are 263 men who say Yes to CHD in ever smokers (totally 880 men) and the proportion is 29.89%. "CHD, n (%)" and "263(29.89)" are used in the corresponding cells to express it. Similar to other diseases. If there are other typos in tables, let us know please.

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Discretionary Revisions

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
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

Reply:

We have revised "competing interests" and "acknowledgements", etc.

"The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests" is replaced by "We declare that we have no competing interests".

"The authors would like to thank the doctors of 323 hospital, 451 hospital and the 22 retirement centers for their assistance. Thanks those who once help to collect data." is replaced by "We gratefully acknowledge assistance of the doctors of 323 Hospital, 451 Hospital, the staff of 22 Retirement Centers and those who helped to collect data for this study."

"All authors have read and approved the final manuscript" is replaced by "We have read and approved the final manuscript"

Although we have revised the manuscript many times, it may still have some problems, please let us know if so. Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

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