Reviewer's report

**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 (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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?

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".

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.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
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