Reviewer’s report

Title: Development and evaluation of a leadership training program for public health emergency response: results from a Chinese study

Version: 3 Date: 12 March 2008

Reviewer: Andrew Garrett

Reviewer’s report:

When I review papers, I leave most of my comments open to the authors, so I will attach them here:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Needs more clarification to specifically identify the research question and/or purpose of the intervention.

Nice clarification here, but see my comments above re 3.3

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

See previous comment, this is the greatest liability of the paper, and as it stands, is a fatal flaw. The paper is not publishable in my opinion until this is addressed.

See above, I still feel this section is too under-developed.

3. Are the data sound?

They appear to be- but difficult to determine not understanding the educational intervention

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

No- it is not clear to me what the educational intervention was, and therefore what the expected outcome should be based upon it.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
No, see above

9. Is the writing acceptable?
I acknowledge the difficulty in writing scientific English when it is not your native tongue. Most of the text reads very well, but as it stands the paper needs extensive further editing and polishing, and would benefit from collaboration with a native English speaker who could help rewrite some of the content. I do not feel that it is ready for publication at this point.

The English is very easy to follow now, although not grammatically correct in every instance. That being said, this article has good information to share and the English is clear to follow. As long as the Editors are OK with this, it should not prevent the paper from moving forward in my mind.

Reviewer's report
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Please number your comments and divide them into
- Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods section is fatally flawed at this point, needs major revision.
Paper is heavily weighted on the background, and provides little to no information on the actual intervention itself.

As mentioned above, the writing needs extensive further polishing by a native English speaker to make it more readable.

- Minor Essential Revisions

See above, many word choices that are not English words or awkward writing

- Discretionary Revisions

Background section seems a little too long and "fluffed" with unnecessary information
I appreciate the edits and rewrites here. The article is easy to follow now, but please see suggestions about methods.

What next?

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Based on your assessment of the validity of the manuscript, what do you advise should be the next step?

- Accept without revision
- Accept after discretionary revisions (which the authors can choose to ignore)
- Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to make)
- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
- Reject because scientifically unsound
- Reject because too small an advance to publish (note that BMC Public Health will publish all sound studies including sound negative studies)

I would move this up to Accept after Minor Essential Revisions relevent to the Methods section, and I appreciate the courteous cover letter they sent back.

Level of interest

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BMC Public Health has a policy of publishing all scientifically sound research whatever its level of interest. However if you choose one of the first three categories below, we may ask the authors if they would like the manuscript considered instead for the more selective journal BMC Medicine.

- An exceptional article (of the kind that might have warranted publication in such journals as Nature, Cell, Science, New England Journal of Medicine, British Medical Journal)
- An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field (of the kind that might be found in the leading specialist journal in its field, such as Immunity, Development, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Gastroenterology)
- An article of importance in its field
- An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
- An article of limited interest
- An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

With a more detailed Methods section, I would move this up a notch. That training is effective is moderately interesting regardless of the country being
considered. The content is very important—specifically their agenda around public health preparedness.

Quality of written English
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As we do not charge for access to published research, we cannot undertake the costs of editing. If the language is a serious impediment to understanding, you should choose the first option below, and we will ask the authors to seek help. If the language is generally acceptable but has specific problems, some or all of which you have noted, choose the second option.

- Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
- Needs some language corrections before being published
- Acceptable (with the understanding that it's not perfect)

Statistical review
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Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician?

If you feel that the manuscript needs to be seen by a statistician, but are unable to assess it yourself then please could you suggest alternative experts in your confidential comments to the editors.

- Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
- Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
- No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician. (but would benefit greatly from having more clear layout of the data)

Declaration of competing interests
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We ask all peer reviewers of medical papers to declare their competing interests in relation to the paper they are reviewing. The peer reviewer declaration is included in the report bearing your name that will be sent to the authors, and published on our website if the article is accepted.

In the context of peer review, a competing interest exists when your interpretation of data or presentation of information may be influenced by your personal or financial relationship with other people or organizations. Reviewers should disclose any financial competing interests but also any non-financial competing interests that may cause them embarrassment were they to become public after the publication of the manuscript.

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