Reviewer's report

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

Version: 5 Date: 16 May 2008

Reviewer: Andrew Garrett

Reviewer's report:

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 relevant to the Methods section, and I appreciate the courteous cover letter they sent back.

It's up to you as editor at this point whether you feel that my suggestion is necessary. I think it should be essential in order to meet the spirit of sharing lessons learned. Plus, it's easy to do, really just looking for an appendix. The authors did not address this in their comments back to me, so I am assuming they do not think it is important (or did not get that feedback to begin with). I was surprised that it was not addressed.

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)
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- 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 undertaken 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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