Author's response to reviews

Title: Oral health status and oral health knowledge, attitudes and behavior among rural children in Shaanxi, western China: a cross-sectional survey

Authors:

Jianghong Gao (mamaluck@sohu.com)
Jianping Ruan (ruanj@mail.xjtu.edu.cn)
Lin Zhao (zhaol@mail.xjtu.edu.cn)
Hong Zhou (zhouhong@mail.xjtu.edu.cn)
Ruizhe Huang (huangrzh@mail.xjtu.edu.cn)
Jiangang Tian (tianjiankang@mail.xjtu.edu.cn)

Version: 7 Date: 16 November 2014

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your response regarding our manuscript entitled “Oral health status and oral health knowledge, attitudes and behavior among rural children in Shaanxi, western China: a cross-sectional survey” (ID: 4983006991311231). Your comments have been very helpful in improving our paper. We have read your comments carefully and have made revisions. Point-by-point responses are summarized below.

1# You indicated that you obtain consent directly from 12-15 year olds included in your study. Please clarify if the ethics committee approved the lack of parental consent for the 12-15 year olds?

Thank you very much for your thoughtful suggestion. In the pre-survey, we found that most of 12-15 year olds in rural school in Shaanxi were boarders at school, because their parents went into cities to do odd jobs. So it was difficult to let their parents sign an informed consent. Therefore, before the start of this survey, we would explain the aim of our investigation, method of operation in details to the schoolmasters and teachers, and we promised that we would let each student know their oral health problem and give some suggestions. We would try to let the schoolmasters and teachers help us to explain to the students, and help the 12-15 year olds had a communication with their parents or caregivers about this survey via phone. If the children and their parents or caregivers all agreed it, the children signed the informed consent. Conversely, if any one of the parents or caregivers and children did not agree it, the children could not participate in the survey. Therefore, in view of the actual situation, although we did not have parents' written consent, all the 12-15 year olds in this survey would have an communicate with their parents or caregivers about this survey. We explained the situation to the ethics committee, and the ethics committee approved to our investigation for the 12-15 year olds only if the 12-15 year olds students signed informed consent.
2# Also, could you clarify if the parents were informed that their children would be invited to take part in this study?

Thank you very much for your good question. Because most 12-15 year olds' parents went into cities to do odd jobs in rural school, many 12-15 year olds in rural school were boarders at school. So it was difficult to let their parents sign an informed consent. However, the 12-15 year olds invited to take part in this study had a communication with their parents or caregivers about this survey via phone, and their parents also know and agree to their children to participate in this survey.

3# Was it possible for children to decide not to take part in your study? If so, did any of them decide not to take part?

Thank you very much for your good question. In the study, only if children and their parents or caregivers all agreed to take part in our study, the children participated in the study. Conversely, if any one of them did not agree it, the children could not participate in the survey. Therefore, if the children did not want to take part in our study, they could not participate in the survey. Fortunately, due to the teachers’ and our patient explanation, all the students were quite willing to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely,
Jianghong Gao