Reviewer’s report

Title: Questionnaire survey about use of an online appointment booking system in one large tertiary public hospital outpatient service center in China

Version: 2 Date: 7 December 2013

Reviewer: Joshua Vest

Reviewer’s report:

The authors report on a survey of patient and provider satisfaction with hospital wait times and an appointment booking system. The paper could be improved and made clearer in several ways.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction

Paragraph 2. The paragraph contains too different ideas: satisfaction and the response of the government.

Methods

Study population

"...sample size was set at 1000 patients and 200 doctors..." Using what criteria? Was the a power calculation? Was there a target response precision? Describe the "Using the convenience sampling method" more in detail. How does this relate to the comment in the Results that the patients were "random"?

Design

Doesn't the fact the survey was only delivered to patients who got care (i.e. after they see a provider) really bias the sample? If waiting was so long and bad, what about those who never got to see the doctor?

Analysis of data

The formulas are actually not very useful. A plain description of what the statistic means is more useful. What is important is that the "satisfaction" values you present is actually an inverse scale and that you have that fact hidden in the legend of Figure 1. It needs to be called out in the methods that the higher the score the lower the satisfaction. It might make sense to invert that ordinal scale for presentation purposes since most readers will want a higher number to be "more" satisfied, not less.

Results

Table 1 and associated text. English language readers really have no frame of reference for these statistics. The categories make sense, but I do not know how
they compare to the population as a whole. Some commentary about how the sample is or is not generalizable would be helpful.

Table 2. The Median time for all of those categories was 30 minutes? That seems highly unlikely given the variable mean times. If the means vary across groups, wouldn't you expect the medians to as well? At least something be different?

Levels of satisfaction about the services available paragraph contains too much information from different tables and figures and is hard to follow. It needs to be broken up and called out much more clearly.

Use and opinions of WAS
Did you ask about access to the WAS? The results assume that every respondent had access to the technology to use the WAS, is that correct?

Again the presentation of the results in this section is difficult. Why would occupation make a difference on mode preference? I could see age, gender, location, education, how you pay, but not necessarily occupation.

Table 3 is fairly unreadable. The column headings are not informative, there is too much information, and there is no indication of what are important differences. If the authors want the information documented, it could be an appendix.

DISCUSSION
Page 14 the p-value should be in the results.

Minor Essential Revisions
Introduction
Paragraph 1. The first sentence is a run-on.
Paragraph 1. there are two commas around ", or,"
Paragraph 2. The first sentence is a run-on.
Paragraph 3. The figure of 8,000 belongs in the Methods and is duplicated there.

Methods
Paragraph 1. "The outpatients' center there includes..." Suggest, "The facility's outpatient center includes..."

Discretionary Revisions
Introduction
Paragraph 1: "trialed" is not a common word in US English.

Methods
Design
Paragraph 2: Remove extra comma between in particular and doctors
Discussion

Elements of the Discussion (e.g. waiting in line all night) appeared in the introduction already.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'