Reviewer's report

Title: Availability and Use of Essential Medicines in China: Manufacturing, Supply, and Prescribing in Shandong and Gansu Provinces

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2010

Reviewer: Majid Cheraghali

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Page 2; Paragraph 3: Is the reimbursement body is governmental? If so why some items on the NEML are not reimbursable?

2. Page 4; Paragraph 2: Considering that WHO EML is just a model list for developing NEML by the countries, and if China has an NEML why authors assumed that WHO EML should be fully available in the country. I believe including WHO EML in this study is fruitless and somehow misleading. I propose this part and related discussion and column in table 4 should be removed from the manuscript.

3. Page 4; Paragraph 3: Why authors excluded antibiotics prescribed for the infectious disease treatment from their survey.

4. Page 6: Discussion; 2nd paragraph: Authors should explain why they did not use a more logic approach (than simple random sampling) e.g. representatives of clinical groups present in NELM for their survey.

5. Page 7; Discussion line 4-5: I think without presenting data or referring to a reference conclusion about the safety, effectiveness and efficacy of the medicines is very "strong".

6. Page 7; Discussion: I assume comparing data presented in this paper especially those regarding prescribing indicators with those reported from other countries will add to the usefulness of the Discussion.

7. Table 2: What is RMB? Local currency? What is its relation to USD or Euro?

8. Table 5; Row 3: What is the value for the cost? Local currency or USD?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'