Reviewer's report

Title: Integrated Syphilis/HIV Screening in China: A Qualitative Analysis

Version: 2 Date: 20 October 2009

Reviewer: Sten Vermund

Reviewer's report:

Forgive me for bringing up new issues, but I have been asked to review this revised manuscript for the first time, so for me it is a first review. I found the article to be interesting and well-written.

MAJOR ISSUES:

1. pp.8-9- I found the topics in the Conclusions to be presented much too briefly to be adequately informative. Also, it was odd that they were considered "conclusions" since several points had nothing to do with the data per se and were much more HIV-related compared to the STI thrust of the article. The authors would do very well to reconsider this conclusion and not present major issues in such a pithy (and uninformative) fashion, e.g., New Cooperative Medical System, "staggering scope" testing (inefficient or efficient, getting at highest risk or just doing what the Russians did in the 1980s with millions of tests in low-risk persons), approaches of HIV testing (one-time only or integrated and sustained).

MINOR ISSUES:

2. Abstract/Methods- The term "purposive sample" could mean many things. A more precise definition is needed here.

3. Abstract/Results- "Assistant physicians" could refer to informal providers vs. formally trained physician extenders. Could their formal background/credentials be made explicit (a very brief synopsis of what is on p.6)?

4. p.4, Methods- "A qualitative approach was used because of the limited data available to structure quantitative data collection [12] and the complexity of social factors in relation to operational clinic characteristics [16]." This reviewer did not understand this sentence. Are the qualitative data a step in designing subsequent questionnaires for epidemiological or interventional research in the future, or are they the end in themselves? Qualitative research can inform the structure and nature of future questions, but may be more free-standing. It would be helpful to know the broader context here.

6. p.7, discussion- It makes this reviewer nervous to read “This study provides the first empiric operational data in a range of STI clinics in China,...” as there is a vast Chinese language literature that may or may not have been scoured by the investigators. I guess if the authors are positive that theirs is the first, the statement can stand, but one might choose slightly different wording if not certain.

I hope that my comments can be useful in final revisions for this meritorious research contribution.

**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:**

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