Reviewer's report

Title: Growing Old Before Growing Rich: Inequality in health service utilization among the mid-aged and elderly in Gansu and Zhejiang Provinces, China

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Reviewer: Teh Wei Hu

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This paper is to address an important issue of the inequality in health services utilization in China. It is a very informative paper. Several comments and suggestions are as follows:

1. Sample size and variable definition
   a. The CHARLS data has 2,555 individuals of Gansu and Zhejiang provinces. It would be useful to provide a separate sample size figure for each province in Table 1.
   b. Given a detailed sub-sample categories, such as age/gender (6 subgroups), the study may not have enough statistical power to calculate ‘CI’ values in Table 1 for each subcategory.
   c. Are all of the values reported in Table 1 weighted by the sampling probability?
   d. Since a very large proportion of respondents are under ‘Farmer or no job’ category, it would be useful to separate these two categories. The data section did not address the missing value and non-response issue.
   e. There is a huge disparity of income level between the two provinces. Even though the samples are divided into 4 income quantities within each province, it would be useful to show the range of income within each quartile for each province.

2. Empirical Analysis
   a. The calculated CI values in Table 1 are for ‘health services determinants’. Are the CI values calculated with respect to the health variable? How is the health variable used to do the calculation?
   b. I Presume results in Table 3 are calculated for Table 4?
   c. Within Table 4, the most important and statistically significant variables are the ‘self-rated health status’. In the inpatient and outpatient services utilization equations, this is expected. Because there is a causality issue, most of the other variables are not statistically significant, except for the income variables.
   d. Explain the meaning of ‘Prop’ under Table 4. Why do some values exceed
100%, either in negative or positive sign? May delete this column.
e. An explanation is needed for Figure 1, (2) contribution in percentage.
Finally, there are quite a few typographic errors in the paper.