Reviewer's report

Title: Outpatient Drug Prescribing Practice in the Rural Township Health Centers in Sichuan Province of West China

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Reviewer: P Ravi Shankar

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Major compulsory revisions:
Page 3, background section, paragraph 1, kindly explain what is a township health center and its role in the Chinese healthcare system.

Paragraph 3 and elsewhere money should also be stated in an international currency like US dollars for the benefit of international readers. The conversion rate of Yuan and US Dollars should also be stated.

In the Background section, information about how primary healthcare is delivered in China is required. Are the township health centers run by the government and is consultation and medicines free for patients?

Page 4, Methods section: Kindly clarify whether the data the authors used came from the national survey. Did the authors carry out any survey of their own? Do the authors’ have to take any permission to use the national survey data for publication purposes?

Why were the particular dates of sampling chosen? The authors have to explain whether sampling from just four days will give a representative data and information about prescribing patterns. Were the prescribers aware that they were being monitored? What about ethical approval and ethical considerations of the study?

Page 4, disease distribution: It is true that the authors have taken samples from all seasons. However, one day is too short a period according to the reviewer and this may have affected the diseases observed in the study. How can the authors justify that these are the common diseases in the region’s population given their limited sampling period?

Page 4, the cost should also be in US dollars for international readers.

Page 5: What is Chinese patent medicine and why was it studied in the drug utilization survey?

Page 5: Why did the authors study the utilization of hormones? Which hormone preparations are the authors referring to?

Page 6, why has the national prescription system of China recommended an average of six drugs per prescription which is nearly three times the WHO recommended value?
Page 7, are the authors able to suggest any possible reasons why prescribers use hormones and antibiotics together?

Who are the prescribers in the health centers studied? Are they doctors or paramedical personnel?

Page 8, the use of the term ‘drug abuse’ is confusing. Internationally the term has a different meaning. Do the authors mean ‘irrational use of drugs’?

The Discussion section in many areas is rambling and not well focused. There are abrupt transitions from one sentence to the other and in many cases the authors’ writing is difficult to understand.

The authors have not stated their conclusions clearly in the manuscript though they have done so in the Abstract.

The number of tables at seven I feel is too large. I feel four tables would be ideal and data from some of the tables can be mentioned in the text.

In conclusion I feel the authors’ have good data in their study but the data has not been well presented. The language needs significant improvement throughout the manuscript and the authors should take the help of a native English speaker to copyedit the manuscript. The presentation of the manuscript should be improved.

As the authors’ are considering an international journal as an outlet for their work they should compare their results with those found in health facilities in other developing countries. At present the references are mainly from China and in many cases the international reader is not provided enough background material to understand the significance of the results.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests