Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 29 January 2012

**Reviewer:** Adrian Sleigh

**Reviewer's report:**

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

We need more information in Methods on the NHSS prescription survey instrument. Who collected and reported the data, on what form, and with what training and supervision? Was the data collection form pre-tested and shown to be accurate? In particular, did the survey respondents have clear definitions of the various drug categories - especially 'antibiotics' and 'hormones'? Did 'antibiotics' include all antimicrobials? Did 'injection' include intravenous infusion? Can the authors define 'hormones' more specifically - do they mean 'corticosteroids'? If so that specific term should replace 'hormones' throughout the text..

In the Limitations section there is no mention of possible measurement error. This possible error needs to be considered in the Limitations section and if it occurred some comment is needed on the impact of the error on study results.

The locus of the survey needs to be clarified using standard Chinese terminology. I am not familiar with the term "Township Health Centre"? Where do they fit into the Chinese health system? Could the authors mean Village Health Centre. (staffed by village doctors) or perhaps Township (former commune) Hospital (outpatient care) staffed by Township Hospital Doctors? It may help to create a diagram showing at what level in the health care system hierarchy the survey took place.

Some relevant literature is missing from this paper (eg a paper by Sun X et al that I coauthored - 'Prescribing behaviour of village doctors under China's New Cooperative Medical Scheme', Social Science & Medicine, Volume 68, Issue 10, May 2009, Pages 1775-1779; Some literature referred to by this SSM paper also is not mentioned), The authors need to check again for relevant Chinese literature on this important topic.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests but I have coauthored a paper and expressed views on this topic myself (Sun X et al 'Prescribing behaviour of village doctors under China's New Cooperative Medical Scheme', Social Science & Medicine, Volume 68, Issue 10, May 2009, Pages 1775-1779). I attach a copy of the final proof of this article.