Reviewer's report

Title: An online evaluation about the effect of a personnel intervention pilot study for village doctors using electronic health records

Version: 2  Date: 6 February 2014

Reviewer: Kamala Thriemer

Reviewer's report:

Review

This is generally an interesting paper documenting the need for constant support in the introduction of electronic health records in China. However the paper needs major review to clarify methodologies used and make the reader understand how the results were obtained. I would also encourage the authors to have the manuscript reviewed by a native English speaker (e.g. the last author?).

Major compulsory

General comments:

- "Personell intervention" – I would suggest to rephrase this to e.g. “educational intervention for health care staff” or something similar. It easily misreads as “personal intervention” and is therefore misleading.
- The word “trial group” should be replaced by “intervention group”

Introduction:

- The phrase “Especially in depressed rural areas, doctors are often unwilling to use EHR due to insufficient understanding of its importance and a lack of skill in its operation” needs a reference since this is the rationale to do the study
- The last sentence of the introduction should include what the intervention was, e.g. “education”, “training”, “support”. Otherwise the reader is left in the dark what you were actually doing.

Methods:

- It is unclear to the reader what the questionnaires were about. The results presented later seem to be derived from an evaluation/extraction of the actual electronic health records. The authors have to clarify therefore
  o what kind of data the questionnaires/interviews collected
  o who was interviewed (e.g. head of household)
  o what data that is presented was retrieved from the electronic record system itself and what data from the questionnaire
- I wonder about the reason to compare only two community health service units? The authors should be aware that there are inherent problems when comparing the results from the two units. Basically it is very hard to separate variability due to the intervention (what we want to see) from the variability due to differences in
the experimental units (what we don’t want to see). It would have been nice to have a bigger number of health units in the intervention and the control arm. The authors should mention this in the limitation section.

• It might be good to mention how you came up with the sample size for the records you extracted/families included.

• The method section should describe in more detail how the intervention was performed (e.g. group discussion or face to face teaching, time spent on retraining, supervision also between the monthly visits?) It might be good to add a table and/or supplementary file with the detailed training program including the number of trainers and trainees etc)

Results & Discussion

Streamlined according to the revision made in the methods section

Minor Essential

• Also it might be good to explain how the control group was observed. Where there also monthly visits? Or was data only extracted from the health records without further interaction. If there was interaction and the health staff was aware of being observed this might be a reason why for some of the variables we also see significant increases in the control group.

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

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'