Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of the effects of comprehensive reform on primary healthcare institutions in Anhui Province

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Reviewer: Yanhua Hao

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This revision of the submitted manuscript had improved much, however, the core research question and findings has not been clearly articulated. The languages still need to be edited before publishing.

In this paper, evaluation and analysis is lack of a theoretical framework, since this study is an evaluation research, a set of clear objectives and evaluation criteria should be introduced.

What problems existed in the primary health institutions? What is the root of the problem? Why to carry out comprehensive reform? What targets will the reforms to achieve? What specific reform measures were taken? What indicators selected to measure the objectives of reform? How about effect of the reform?

These series of questions is the basic logic of research design and writing. The authors could refer to Health System Building Blocks Framework of WHO recommended and "input - process - output - outcome" reform evaluation framework to well organize the content of the study.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. Background: What problems existed in the primary health institutions? What is the root of the problem? Why to carry out comprehensive reform? What targets will the reform to achieve? These questions should be explained clearly in this section. Especially, the study did not clarify the specific objectives of the comprehensive reform. To return the public welfare nature of primary care institutions? Reduce patients' burden of medical expenditure? Improve the quality and fairness of services? Or improve the motivation of medical staff?

2. Methods: because there are many differences between urban and rural primary care institutions, so the effect of the reform is better to be evaluated separately.

3. Data collection section of Methods: mixed qualitative and quantitative method was mentioned in this study. How did the participants of the qualitative interviews and seminars be selected and approached? Did the governmental participants
come from provincial or local agency? Was a balance between rural and urban participants considered? What quantitative data were collected? The sampling method of the institutions should be introduced in this section.

4. Data Analysis section of methods: the author did not provide the information on How to recode and analyze the data from the interview and seminars.

5. Data Analysis section of methods: The classification of Indicators selected to measure reform effect existed somewhat problematic. Because of the vague objectives of evaluation, the choice of indicators is lack of sufficient relevance and specificity. For example, to measure the effect of compensation mechanism with the indicator of outpatient visits, inpatients visits, the proportion of prescription including antibiotics is not appropriate obviously.

6. Method: This study is lack of information on satisfaction survey or interview feedback on reform effect from the key stakeholder, local residents.

7. Method: The process of data collection on prescription survey in data analysis section should be moved to the data collection section.

8. Methods: Please explain what standardized construction compliance rate is.

9. Results: Statistical test analysis should be performed for the quantitative part of results. For example, table 1, 2, 3, and 5, did the changes have statistical significance?

10. Results: It is not clear the qualitative data were analyzed. How did the relevant results derived from the data (e.g. from whom, what they said).

11. Discussion: explanation on decrease of outpatient cost primarily attributive to lower drug prices, but the explanation on increased costs of hospitalization is somehow far-fetched, and lack of evidence. the data of revenue structure of primary care institutions should be presented to clarify the reasons for its increase.

12. Discussion: the interpretation of results for Table 4 is not very clear, and exist some obscure meaning. Some English expression need to be improved.

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests