Reviewer's report

Title: China rural health workforce project: research design and baseline description

Version: 2 Date: 20 September 2012

Reviewer: Yingnan Zhao

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The structure of this manuscript needs a major revision. Overall, it could be more concise and clear.
   a. The title could be more appropriate and meaningful to provide a clue about the contents of this article. ex. Current situation of village doctors in China
   b. Some background information about barefoot doctor or village doctor that has been talked in context, should be provided in the introduction. Ex. On page 9 paragraph 3, pension standard should be introduced in the background.
   c. There is a lack of the purpose of THIS article in introduction/background.
   d. It seems some statistical tests have been done for correlations (page 12, paragraph 3). These should be presented in the results, in order to discuss them later on.
   e. In methods, more details of interviewees (i.e. who were interviewed by each of the four questionnaires) should be reported, as well as the number of overall interviewees. Instead, the sample gained should be described as part of the results. In addition, response rate should be reported.
2. It is not clear that the results reported in this article are from village doctors (clinic doctors) or rural doctors, who may be the doctors working in THC?
3. It reads like the authors try to make the inference about economic status of the township and the sex ratio of doctors, from page 7 paragraph 2. However, this has not been well discussed.
4. In discussion (page 10, paragraph 2), the authors have made appropriate statements and comparisons about the gender ratio issue. This study shows fewer female village doctors in rural China, which is consistent with the national trend of fewer female health professionals in general in China and other countries. By comparing the village doctors with nurses, it cannot support the authors’ statement on the imbalance problem only existing in rural China.
5. There are interesting points on the issues of aging, education and practice style, however these should be better organized and presented for an easy understanding. Some statements need to be consistent. Ex. Page 11, paragraph 2. The issue of adequate maternal and gynecology is raised. It could be the result of sex imbalance, but not cause.
Minor Essential Revisions
1. More scientific language should be used in the whole article.
2. It will make the article more understandable without grammar and syntax errors.
3. Table 1, “average” means total (of 5 counties)?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.