Reviewer's report

Title: Antibiotic sales in rural and urban pharmacies in northern Vietnam: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 22 July 2013

Reviewer: Ashish Pathak

Reviewer's report:

Background
1. Reword the first line in para 1
2. What is the incidence/ prevalence of self-medication with antibiotics in Vietnam?

Methods
1. What was the procedure of randomization of the selected pharmacies?
2. Usually DDDs are the method of choice for presenting the drug use data. What is the reason why authors did not choose it?
3. It is not clear in the methods section what practices were actually observed and what were recorded from the first questionnaire in the pharmacies?
4. Sample size for the quantitative part of the study is missing.
5. Can the fact that 13 respondents were also pharmacy owners affect the results? Please discuss in the discussion.
6. Why did the authors choose in-depth interview over other methods of qualitative data collection and interpretation?
7. There are three distinct methods of doing the qualitative content analysis. These are the conventional, directed, or summative. Which of the method was used in the analysis by the authors?

Results
1. For ease of reading please round off the percentages i.e. without decimal point.
2. It is unclear what is the denominator for results presented for pharmacy characteristics? Is it 43 as mentioned on page 6 in methods section? Or is it 13 as mentioned in the results section? Please make it clear for the readers.
3. What constituted a “drug transaction”? Was it based on prescription or OTC sale or both? (Please make this clear in methods section)
4. In the economic indicators of antibiotic sale the authors give contradictory statements with regards to imported antibiotics on page 10 para 2 line 7 and line 10. Please correct.

Discussion
1. Please also discuss inappropriate prescribing by the health care workers.

2. Do authors have data regarding pharmacists renting out their licenses? Please discuss this issue more and the role it may have in reducing inappropriate prescribing.

3. Please discuss the shortage of pharmacy staff in Vietnam in short.

4. Focus group discussions are mentioned on page 16 para 2 by the authors. Were these conducted? How many? These are not mentioned in the methods section.

Minor changes

Discussion

1. Please reword line five on para 1 on page 16

2. Reference for the Indian study is missing in the first para.

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

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 declare that I have no competing interests.