Author's response to reviews

Title: Relationship between recreational drug use and HIV/STIs among Chinese men who have sex with men: mediation through multiple sexual partnerships

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear editor of BioMed Central Editorial,

Thank you very much for your letter dated September 1, 2014 regarding our manuscript entitled “Relationship between recreational drug use and HIV/STIs among Chinese men who have sex with men: mediation through multiple sexual partnerships” (MS: 7254900371373203). We appreciate the opportunity to address the comments from you and the referees. We hope that this word count will be acceptable to the journal. We thank you again for your constructive comments on revising the manuscript. Please feel free to contact us if you have any question regarding our revision.

Sincerely,

Junjie Xu and Chen Zhang on behalf of authors
Response to Referees

Referee(s)' Comments to Author:
Referee: 1
Comments to the Author

1. *This study is conducted in seven large Chinese cities. It is not clear why these seven cities were chosen. Do these cities have the highest HIV prevalence across the country? Or Do they have the highest drug use % across the country? A brief description of the selected cities would be useful.*

**Response:** Thanks for referee’s advice. In our revised manuscript, we have indicated that these selected seven cities consist of traditional drug-use city (e.g., Kunming), under-developed inner city (e.g., Shenyang, Jinan, Zhengzhou, Changsha), and developed coastal cities (Shanghai, Nanjing), which can represent the overall demographics and HIV epidemic in China.

2. *Authors pooled the analyses from six cities. However, previous studies have shown that demographic and HIV/STI epidemic vary geographically across China. Particularly, authors included Kunming, which is a city with very high HIV prevalence and drug use rate, compared to other cities. It is not clear whether the demographic and behaviours are different between these six cites, if these the socio-demographic compositions of the samples are different between cities, and these factors influence the behaviours and epidemic, authors should not pool the data together.*

**Response:** Thanks for referee’s advice. As explained in the previous response, these selected seven cities consist of traditional drug-use city (e.g., Kunming), under-developed inner city (e.g., Shenyang, Jinan, Zhengzhou, Changsha), and developed coastal cities (Shanghai, Nanjing), which can represent the overall demographics and HIV epidemic in China. Therefore, we decided to pool the six cross-city data. Please find the revision in the method section.

3. *The range of MSM have ever used drug (0.1-44%) is very large, it will be helpful if there is any mean or median estimate. In addition, the majority of MSM who also use drug are actually male sex workers (money boys) (Chow EPF PLOS ONE 2012: e48025).*

**Response:** Thanks for referee’s advice. We have provided the median as 2.4% for the wide range of the prevalence of drug use among MSM, and cited Chow’s paper including drug use among money boys. Please find the updates in the revision.

4. *It will be useful to provide a percentage of drug use among the general population*

**Response:** Thanks for referee’s thoughtful advice. There is no up-to-date data describing the exact prevalence of drug use among general Chinese population. However, we did provide some literatures to support our statement that MSM had higher prevalence of drug use compared to people in general in China. Please find our revision in the introduction part.
Referee: 2

Comments to the Author

1. Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract:
Page 4, Line 72, please change “put” to “puts”;
Page 4, Line 83, please remove “ever”;
Page 4, Line 84, please change “in past 6 months” to “in the past 6 months”, please also change similar phrases systematically across the paper;
Page 4, Line 96, please change “though” to “through”.

Methods:
Page 6, Line 135, please remove “interview”; 
Page 6, Line 160, please change “drug” to “drugs”; 
Page 6, Line 162, please change “nil” to “no”;

Discussion:
Page 11, Line 230, please add “of” after “0.42%”; 
Page 11, Line 235, please discuss more about “Rush use”; 
Page 11, Line 243, please remove “perhaps”; 
Page 11, Line 245, please change “enhanced risky sex” to “unprotected sex”, please also change this systematically across the paper;
Page 12, Line 262, please add “the” before “Chinese”.

Response: we have addressed all grammatical issues and proofread the revision carefully before resubmission.

2. Please provide STATA syntax and STATA results with explanation. I would like to have a look.

Response: we have included the data analysis output in the resubmission.