Author's response to reviews

Title: Measles vaccine coverage estimates in an outbreak three years after the nation-wide campaign in China: implications for measles elimination, 2013

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

With regard for the details of ethics and consent for the other aspects of the study (i.e. use of administrative data, coverage survey & immunization record review), these data are either routinely reported to China CDC (coverage survey, and administrative [doses administered] data), or are considered part of a public health outbreak investigation (immunization record review). China CDC Ethical Review Committee exempts routine public health outbreak investigations from IRB review since they are part of the necessary public health functions. The administrative data are doses administered data, which are required to be routinely reported as part of vaccine accountability. Coverage surveys are required to be reported to upper-level CDCs. Immunization records must be reviewed to obtain vaccination status. In no cases are individual identifying data retained by the investigators or used in the analytic data sets. China CDC and lower level CDCs are required to investigate vaccine preventable disease outbreaks as part of routine work.

To address these question, we have consolidated the ethical review committee information into one section that includes the ERC approval for the blood sample analyses, and adds the following:

"Ethical review considerations.

Individual identifying information on the persons whose blood was tested for measles antibodies was not obtained by the investigators; the individuals were not contacted or interviewed; and informed consent was therefore not obtained. Obtaining and testing these samples of residual blood was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Approval Notice No. 201410), recognizing that the right and the welfare of the subject are adequately protected; the potential risks are outweighed by potential benefits. Administrative (doses administered) data, coverage survey data, and vaccination record review data that are collected as part of a vaccine preventable disease outbreak investigation are considered by China CDC’s Ethical Review Committee to be exempt from IRB review. Informed consent is not obtained for accessing administrative, survey, and immunization clinic record data. Individual identifying data were not retained in analytic data sets."

Sincerely,
Luo Huiming
December 29, 2014