Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation and Mechanism for Outcomes Exploration of Providing Public Health Care in Contract Service in Rural China: a Multiple-Case Study with Complex Adaptive Systems Design

Version: Date: 21 December 2014

Reviewer: ANTÓNIO CABRAL

Reviewer's report:

A. Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Provide references to avoid expressing “opinions/views” or personal experience of the authors. Examples:

   Page 4, lines 64-65:

   Page 5, lines 101-104:

2. RESULTS: avoid “opinions/views” or personal experience of the authors. Provide evidence from the data/information gathered. Examples:

   Page 18, lines 383-384; 386-390

   Page 26, lines 555-557

3. DEFINITIONS (DESCRIPTION OF RULES) ARE MISSING:

   The terms of the multiple actor contract (1: Local Government X providers; 2: Providers X users) are not fully and systematically described anywhere in the text. The contract between Local Government X providers is quoted on page 13, lines 357-358, but there is no description of what was being paid, for which performance of the providers. Another example is the “40%” mentioned on page 18, lines 371-374.

   Similarly, it is also difficult to perceive the difference between County A and the others: county A also distributes money among local providers and controls performance (according to Page 13, lines 270-273)

4. PRECISION OF CONCEPTS USED:

   Out-of-Pocket: Page 20, lines 422-425. Needs better description: looks like a pre-paid package, or voluntary insurance, rather that OOP payment, per visit. It would be useful for the non-specialized reader, to be precise about the meaning (and quote the reference for the chosen definition).

   Page 25, line 525: Village clinics became state-owned health organizations? Or
“state-contracted”?

5. DISCUSSION

The “Discussion” should be organized around the concepts – themes that were the theoretical framework for the case-studies.

Most of the context described on page 31 should be sent to the “Background”. Discussion should be based on the “Results”.

The paragraph containing the lines 673-696, pages 31-32, should make it clearer that only County B has undertaken the adaptation of higher level instructions in order to provide incentives to both providers and users, and consequent improvements in the terms of the local contracts and the performance of the providers.

B. Minor Essential Revisions:

6. ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING:

Various long paragraphs become dull to read as the grammatical construction is not perfect.

7. TYPING MISTAKES:

Page 4, line 68:

FINAL COMMENT:

This is a fascinating story, and very well researched. It deserves an improved presentation.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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