Author’s response to reviews

Title: Effect of an educational intervention on HPV knowledge and attitudes towards HPV and its vaccines among junior middle school students in Chengdu, China

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Dear Editor and reviewer,

Thank you very much for your consideration on the potential publication of our manuscript entitled, “Effect of an educational intervention on HPV knowledge and attitudes towards HPV and its vaccines among junior middle school students in Chengdu, China” with manuscript reference No. PUBH-D-18-01472. Your comments and concerns are highly appreciated. Please find the following for the detailed answers according to your comments.

Editor Comments :

Comments 1 : In the Authors' contributions section, the individual contributions of each author should be specified. We have noticed that the contribution of Chen Pu is missing, please clarify it.
Answer 1: Thank you for your kind reminding. In our study, Chen Pu has participated in the data collection, and I have clarified in the revised section of authors’ contribution. (Authors’ contribution section, line 2, page 17)

Comment 2: It has come to our attention that the text in the Supplementary file is not in English. Unfortunately, we cannot publish material in another language unless a Translation is provided. Please either remove the file or provide translation for each slide.

Answer 2: As our health education is provided to the Chinese students and the original version was in Chinese, in order to conform to the journal requirement, we have removed the file.

Comment 3: As your study contains an intervention, could you please clarify whether this intervention was carried by your team of researchers or independent of your team and you are merely reporting its outcomes? If this intervention was carried by your team or would have not taken place without your influence, your study falls within the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)’ definition of a clinical trial: any research study that prospectively assigns human subjects to one or more health related interventions to evaluate the effects on health or biological outcomes. As such, Biomed Central requires that a Trial Registration Number is provided in order for the manuscript to be published. All trials must be registered with an ICMJE approved registry, as listed in the ICMJE guide: http://www.icmje.org/faq.pdf. Do you have a Trial Registration Number? If not, we will have to Reject your manuscript, however you may resubmit once you have obtained it.

Answer 3: Your concerns are highly appreciated. In our study, the intervention was a PPT-based oral education and this education was done by the researchers as mentioned in our main manuscript (Baseline survey and Educational intervention section, line 4-5, page 6). Other than health or biological outcomes, in our study, the proposed outcome of the intervention was the change on knowledge about HPV and its related diseases, especially cervical cancer and the possible future behavioral change to seek HPV vaccination among the WHO recommended primary targeted population in China. When it was conducted, it was not registered with any ICMJE registry because it was not considered as a clinical trial or intervention trial. We just try to evaluate the effect of the school-based health education on changing of health-related knowledge and attitudes thus to provide necessary information for the policy makers to consider such health education as part of their routine school-based education and to promote disease prevention in this country. Plus, the research team had conducted a similar evaluation study among the rural Chinese women in year 2011 and the results were published in BMC cancer in year 2015 without registration to any ICMJE registry (Jing Li et al, Effect of a group educational intervention on rural Chinese women’s knowledge and attitudes about human papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV vaccines, BMC Cancer. 2015;15:691). If you insist that this kind of health education belongs to clinical trials, we can only register retrospectively. However, a resubmission with another whole process review process will not be acceptable since this manuscript has been reviewed for about a year since it was firstly been submitted on April 24, 2018 and all required replies from us were within the due time. We were not informed about the reason for delay until Jan, 11, 2019 that the process was unexpectedly delayed because one of the
reviewers you selected had an undisclosed conflict of interest, and you have to seek a new reviewer. The authors also sincerely hope that the publication time frame will be highly concerned by you.

Comment 4: Please confirm whether informed consent, written or verbal, was obtained from all participants and clearly state this in your manuscript. If verbal, please state the reason and whether the ethics committee approved this procedure. If the need for consent was waived by an IRB or is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including the name of the IRB or a reference to the relevant legislation.

Answer 4: In our study, verbal informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to our study, because singing inform consent would cause some undue threat to the subjects’ privacy. And our study approved by the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) of the West China School of Public Health, Sichuan University. (Ethics approval and consent to participate section, line1-4, page 16)

Comment 5: At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colors. All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files.

Answer 5: we have uploaded a clean vision to the Editorial Manager system

To Professor Adam G. Dunn (Reviewer 3):

Comment 1: There are still issues with the presentation and the quality of the writing. For example, on Page 5 under Research Instrument "administrated" should be "administered" and "includes" should be "included". However, these are mostly minor and while they are wrong, it is still reasonably clear what was meant in each case.

Answer 1: Thanks for your comments and we have checked and corrected these mistakes throughout the manuscript. The corrections were listed as the following: on Page 5 under Research Instrument, "administrated" was corrected as "administered"; "includes" was corrected as “included”. (Research instrument section, line 1-2, page 5); “multivariate” was corrected as “multivariable” (Statistic analysis section, line 2, page 7; Factors associated with the willingness to be vaccinated section, line 2, page 9); “suggested” was corrected as “suggests”, and “is” was corrected as “was” (Discussion section, paragraph 5, line 4 and line 9, page 13).

Comment 2: Rather than reporting the p-values exactly, the authors have replaced the use of "p<0.05" with statistical significance in some places and reported p-values exactly elsewhere. Given that there are multiple comparisons, these should all have been corrected for multiple
comparisons and I would argue that this is an even more important reason to report the exact p-values (as well as raw differences/values) wherever a statement about significance is used. The exact values are reported correctly in the tables so this did not make sense to me.

Answer 2: Thanks for your comment. The authors agree that the exact p value should be clearly presented in the manuscript and we have reported the exact p-values for each odds ratio unless they are below 0.001 in table 3, so we used the “statistical significance” instead of listing the exact P value in the result section. In addition, we have listed the odd ratio (OR) and its 95% confident interval in the result section, it can show whether the difference is significant.

Comment 3: The clear difference between the intervention and the control at baseline should be discussed clearly in the manuscript and explained. Without an explanation it casts doubt on the validity of the study.

Answer 3: Thanks for your suggestion. Because our study was only carried out in two schools of Chengdu and may not be that much representative of the whole city, sampling bias might happen that led to some incomparable variable regarding “have you ever heard of HPV vaccines” between the two groups at baseline. We have added this shortcoming in the paragraph describing limitation of our study in discussion section. (Discussion section, paragraph 8, line 5-8, page 15).