Author’s response to reviews

Title: The effect of methamphetamine abuse on dental caries and periodontal diseases in an Eastern China city

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Title: The effect of methamphetamine abuse on dental caries and periodontal diseases in an Eastern China city

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Response to Editor’s Comments

[Point 1]: The authors have improved the manuscript significantly. The authors however still need to pass the manuscript through a professional editor. There are still flaws with the English synthex and construct. The result states - In all 162 participants, 36.41% (59/62) had systemic diseases. I assume this should be 59/162.

[Response]: Thank you for your suggestion! This error has been corrected. Please see the revised manuscript Page 9 Line 19.
[Point 2]: The measure was oral hygiene habit and not oral health habit.

[Response]: Thank you for your suggestion, all the words “oral health habit” have been replaced with “oral hygiene habit”. Please see the revised manuscript Page 7 Line 14.

[Point 3]: The authors reported in the report section that - The mean number of teeth with wedge-shaped defect in those who were older than 33 years old was significantly higher than those who were younger than 33 years of age (Z=-2.226, p=0.026). There is a whole section on the caries presentation. Unfortunately, the methodology section did not identify this as a variable that was collected. Please correct this - either delete the section or include details in the methodology.

[Response]: Thank you for your suggestion! Considering the low meaning of the results related with wedge-shaped defects for the present conclusions, the results related with wedge-shaped defects were deleted. Please see the revised manuscript Page 10 Line 6, Line 16, and table 1.

[Point 4]: As earlier highlighted, I think the authors have challenges comparing this data with that of the national survey. This is like apples and oranges. It shows up quiet clearly in the result section making analysis of the data challenging and reporting of differences poorly feasible. I suggest that the authors exclude this comparative analysis because of its weakness in this case as highlighted in the prior review. The paper has a lot of methodological strength without the inclusion of this comparative analysis. An addition inferential analysis that can be conducted for the paper exclusive of the comparison is to determine the predictors of caries and poor gingival health for these meth users. I think with this, the paper in itself is beautiful. This has implications for the discussion section and comparison of your findings with that of other studies. As you would see, you could not do statistical analysis for the figures being compared and so the strength of the assertions made in the discussion section is weak (no statistical evidence).

[Response]: According to your suggestion, we have deleted the comparative analysis in Abstract, Methods and Results section. Please see the revised manuscript.

In literature, different studies/surveys had different samples from different countries, different dependent and independent variables, different methods and different results without comparability. We have tried our best to find some corresponding data collected from meth abusers to compare with the present results, but failed. In China, the National Epidemiological Sampling Survey of Oral Health (NESSOH) is the largest-scale and the most authoritative oral health survey, which covers all the provinces in the whole country. In our opinion, the corresponding reference data collected from the general population in similar age group in the same area, can be used as the baseline level to some extent. To show the relative severity of caries and periodontal diseases, we keep some comparison only in Discussion section. Please see the revised manuscript Page 12 Line 18-21, Page 13 Line 4-5.
[Point 5]: Discussion: the authors noted - Drug abusers belong to a special population with abnormal emotions, behaviors and personalities. Please can the authors use alternative non-stigmatising language. The word abnormality should be replaced please.

[Response]: According to your suggestion, the word “abnormal” has been replaced with “disordered”. Please see the revised manuscript Page 11 Line 12.

[Point 6]: Please do not re-quote figures in the discussion section.

[Response]: Thank you for your suggestion! We have deleted the simple requoted figures in Discussion section, and only kept some figures comparison content.

[Point 7]: The authors note - They usually ignore their oral health and have poor oral hygiene. In our study group, more than 70% of former meth abusers brushed their teeth at most once at day, and only about one-third of them rinsed their mouths with tap water after each meal. It is indicated that oral hygiene is neglected by most meth abusers. Please note that the study could not establish a significant difference between meth users and the general population. Therefore alluding to meth users ignoring their oral hygiene is an assumption seeing that the prevalence of calculus is very high in both population. This assertion is therefore speculative.

[Response]: Thank you for your good suggestion! To avoid the speculation, the sentence “In our study group, more than 70% of former meth abusers brushed their teeth at most once at day, and only about one-third of them rinsed their mouths with tap water after each meal. It is indicated that oral hygiene is neglected by most meth abusers. Furthermore” was deleted in Discussion section. In literature, several studies showed that drug abusers, including meth abusers, usually ignored their oral health and had poor oral hygiene. So we added 7 references in this section to maintain the completeness and continuity. Please see the revised manuscript Page 13 Line 14-15.

[Point 8]: The authors note that the prevalence of systemic diseases, especially hepatitis, was unremarkable. Any lesion with a prevalence of higher than 5% is of significant importance. A young population in which over 30% have systemic disorder is remarkable.

[Response]: Thank you for your good suggestion! We have re-discussed the result of the prevalence of systemic diseases in Discussion section. Please see the revised manuscript Page 14 Line 5-11.