Author's response to reviews

Title: Non-use of health care service among empty-nest elderly in Shandong, China: a cross-sectional study

Authors:

Chengchao Zhou (zhouchengchao@sdu.edu.cn)
Chunmei Ji (lcqxxk@126.com)
Jie Chu (sdjn_chj@163.com)
Alexis Medina (amedina5@stanford.edu)
Cuicui Li (785407371@qq.com)
Shan Jiang (123643416@qq.com)
Wengui Zheng (wzheng@sdu.edu.cn)
Jing Liu (liujing@sdu.edu.cn)
Scott Rozelle (rozelle@stanford.edu)

Version: 3 Date: 10 June 2015

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editors:

On behalf of my co-authors, it is my pleasure to resubmit our revised manuscript entitled “Non-use of health care service among empty-nest elderly in Shandong, China: a cross-sectional study” (Manuscript ID 1777698164159637) for reconsideration by BMC Health Services Research.

We believe that the reviewers' comments were helpful and that the revised manuscript now has tighter analyses and a more focused discussion of study implications. We have responded in full to all of the reviewers' comments. In order to facilitate your re-review of these issues, we have included with this letter a detailed, comment-by-comment response to the reviewers.

We continue to believe that the findings stemming from this paper will interest BMC HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH's broad readership, and will offer new insights on the non-use of health service among empty-nest seniors.

We are grateful for your consideration of our work and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely Yours,

Chengchao Zhou, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Public Health
Shandong University
Response by Chengchao Zhou et al.

Reviewer 1:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The paper is reasonably well organized and the quality of written English is acceptable but there are several language issues throughout the paper that require attention (e.g. line 202 “didn’t” is “did not” etc.).

Response: Thanks for your kind words. We have had a read-through and polished the paper carefully, and replaced “didn’t” with “did not” in line 202.

Overall, this paper appear to provide a useful contribution to knowledge but several arrangements should be performed.

-Introduction

This section should detail the purpose of the study exhaustively, or rather explaining all the features and issues of the hypothetical question research. In the present form, the introduction needs reworking: the first and second paragraphs are too general and are not finalized to explain the real challenge of research. I suggest to summarize the introduction into 3 paragraphs following the keywords of your research question: 1. elderly and empty-nest (summarizing and reworking 1st par and 4th par, giving the definition of empty-nest); 2. non-use of health care in elderly and risk factors (explaining more clearly the meaning and the impact of “non-use” using parts of 3rd pa. - when you said at 91 line “few studies have explored non-use” I will aspect the references of these studies! If you do not find specific papers from China, it would be appropriate to search from other setting ) 3. Aim of the study (5th par – in a systematic view reasons and factors could be the same, you should explain the differences, otherwise you should refer to reasons as factors too).

Response: Good suggestion, and we are happy to follow. We have rewritten the Introduction Section into 3 paragraph in the revised manuscript according to the reviewer’s comments. We agree with the reviewer’s comment that reasons and factors are the same, and we also have deleted the second aim (describing the reasons ).

- Methods

The sample is representative of the Shandong population (geographically representative, demographically representative, same household characteristics [wealth, net worth, income, RANGE of income, RANGE of home value, RANGE of net worth, home value, home ownership rate] etc.) and the random selection appears appropriate. Data collection and data analysis are well described and the ethics aspects were considered. Some deficiencies should be edited as follows:

- at line 125: “Figure 1” has not been included in the manuscript.

Response: Good catch. We have added the Figure 1 in the revised version of the manuscript.
-at line 150: “Anderson models” should be changed in “Andersen model”.
Response: Thanks for pointing out this mistake. We have changed “Anderson models” into “Andersen model” in line 150.

-Results
This part is clearly organized and the statistical analysis is well conducted but it would be more appropriate to perform a chi-square test also for comparing reasons of “non-use” between empty-nesters and no-empty-nesters.
Response: Thanks to the reviewer for such suggestion, and we are happy to follow. We have performed a chi-square test and added the result of test (chi-square value and P-value) at the last line of the Table 3, we also describe the result in the third paragraph in the Result part.

-Discussion and Conclusions
Good motivations were presented to justify empty-nesters prevalence, on the contrary the association between financial difficulties and empty-nesters compared to no-empty-nesters is weak without performing a statistical analysis (and actually finding a significant result).
Response: We have performed a chi-square test and presented the result in Table 3. We also added some sentences to discuss the association between financial difficulties and empty-nesters compared to no-empty-nesters.

Limitations of the work are clearly stated (in this case very important is the self-reported bias for the “reasons”).
Response: Thanks for your kind words. Yes, we totally agree with the reviewer that self-reported bias for the “reasons” is very important in this study. As a response, we have added the bias for reported reasons in the Limitation part.

Minor Essential Revisions
-Discussion and Conclusion
The authors should attempt to consider other interesting implications related to their research, this would certainly appeal policy makers. I would expect a more thoughtful examination of the implications of this research.
Response: Thanks for your comments. We have added some implications in the Discussion Section.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published.
Response: We have invited Miss Alexis Medina from Freeman Spogli Institute, Stanford University to polish this manuscript.

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
Reviewer 2

The manuscript focuses on the use of healthcare services among empty-nest seniors, which represents a category not many investigated and a great concern especially in China. Therefore, it appears original even with the limitations of a cross-sectional study. Findings of the study showed inequalities in the elderly population and authors suggest some interventions to reduce them. Authors considered many variables and they use good statistical procedures to analyze them. In my opinion the manuscript is well written, clear and suitable for publication after some minor revisions.

Response: Thanks for your kind words.

Minor Essential Revisions.

Abstract. In my opinion the definition of empty-nest syndrome should be summarized in this section. Introduction. Page 5, line 99-100: a reference should be indicated for these statements.

Response: Thanks for your suggestion, and we have added the definition of empty-nest elderly in the Abstract section. We also have added 2 references to indicate for those statements.

Methods. Empty-nesters should be more clearly defined also in this section.

Response: Thanks for your suggestion. Another reviewer suggest to add a definition of empty-nesters in the Introduction Section, and we have added the definition of empty-nesters in the first paragraph in the Introduction Section.

Discussion. Page 10, lines 240-241: it could be better do not repeat data that were reported in methods.

Response: We agree with the reviewer’s comment. As a response, we have deleted the data repeated here.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field.

Quality of written English: Acceptable.

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