Reviewer's report

Title: Determinants of unequal access to preventive care in China: a multilevel analysis of a cross-sectional household survey

Version: 2 Date: 6 August 2015

Reviewer: Kate Bartlem

Reviewer's report:

1. General comments:

The authors provide a well-detailed explanation of the health insurance context in China, which is necessary for a naïve reader such as myself. This is an important and relevant article that identifies important determinants of inequality in receipt of preventive care, particularly in regards to the impact of different health insurance schemes.

Major compulsory revisions:

2. Results: ‘Overall preventive care usage’ and ‘uptake of general physical examinations’ paragraphs: Should the data here be presented as odds ratios throughout? For instance, “Compared with men, women were 0.2 times more likely to use preventive care services” (lines 393-394) seems to indicate a reduced likelihood of females to use preventive care services, whereas females were more likely to utilise such services. (I may be confused, as I am thinking in odds ratios, as these have been used throughout the tables). Please check – this might simply be my misunderstanding of how the data is presented.

Minor essential revisions:

3. There are quite a number of grammatical mistakes throughout. I have not pointed out each of these occasions, as they are quite numerous, however, this will need attention.

4. Introduction: Para 1, final sentence: provide some examples of the types of preventive care services mentioned here

5. Introduction: Para 4, final sentence: include RMB in full for the first use, for international readers

6. Methods: Data source paragraph 1: Line 212 – Please indicate whether all households, or a random sample of households of the selected communities were invited to participate. If a random sampling procedure was used, please indicate the approximate % of households sampled and/or reference another publication using the larger data source that includes additional sampling information.
7. Methods: Explanatory measures predicting the use of preventive care, socioeconomic status. Please provide more information on the measurement instrument used for household income—specify whether this was a tool designed specifically for this study, or a validated questionnaire.

8. Discussion: Paragraph 4: Given these interesting and important findings regarding the health insurance schemes, and relevance to policy related to these, could the authors make some specific suggestions for addressing these inequalities under these schemes?

Discretionary revisions:

9. Introduction: There is a general lack of referencing throughout the first paragraph. While much of this is general background type information, some specific points should be referenced. For example, para 1, lines 2-3: “Empirical evidence has shown that people with low-income are more likely to suffer from ill health” deserves a reference, preferably for evidence within China (where this study is based)

10. Methods: Outcome measures for the use of preventive care, para 1: Was the receipt of preventive care for these items limited to specific health service contexts (e.g., inpatient service, outpatient, primary care etc), or could participants respond in relation to any health service?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests