Author's response to reviews

Title: What is the working situation and satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county hospitals and their understanding and perception of the reform: A study of public hospital reform in Hubei province of China

Authors:

- Pengqian Fang (pfang@mails.tjmu.edu.cn)
- Zhenni Luo (janerowe@163.com)
- Biyan Wang (wbiyan_1010@163.com)
- Hongxia Gao (banny9566@163.com)
- Wenmin Li (976977873@qq.com)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor and Reviewers,

We would like to thank the editor for giving us a chance to resubmit the paper, and thank the reviewers for their careful reading and giving us comments and constructive suggestions concerning our manuscript entitled “What is the working situation and satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county hospitals and their understanding and perception of the reform: A study of public hospital reform in Hubei province of China” (MS: 1867767246976415). Those comments and suggestions are all valuable and very helpful for revising and improving our paper, as well as the important guiding significance to our researches. Here we submit a new version of our manuscript with the title “What is the working situation and satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county hospitals and their understanding and perception of the reform: A study of public hospital reform in Hubei province of China”, which has been modified according to the reviewers’ suggestions. We tried our best to improve the manuscript and made many changes, in-deep editing and revisions including the contents and the language. We marked the main changes made in blue in the revised manuscript. We appreciate for Editors and Reviewers’ warm work earnestly, and hope that the correction will meet with approval.

Once again, thank you very much for your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely yours
Zhenni Luo, Pengqian Fang

The flowing is a point-to-point response to the three reviewers’ comments:

Reviewer #1 (Reviewer: Edson Araujo)
1. Comment:
Throughout the paper "satisfaction" is used in different means, it would be good to differentiate when it means job satisfaction and satisfaction with specific job related factors (management, salary,
etc.)

Response:
It is a good suggestion that we should differentiate “satisfaction” when it means different meaning. We have made corrections according to this comment. When it means job satisfaction, we wrote “job satisfaction” in the revised manuscript. When it means satisfaction with specific job related factors, we wrote “satisfaction on work-related factors”.

2. Comment:
On page 5, last paragraph authors mentioned studies are "rarely conducted"; does this mean other studies have been conducted in China to address the same issues? If so, please cite. If not, please just re-write the sentence.
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. What we want to express is that other studies focus on the same issues of medical staff in Chinese county pilot hospitals are hard to find. Therefore, we re-wrote the sentence as “To our knowledge, studies on the working status, satisfaction and attitudes toward the reform of medical staff in pilot county hospitals in China in this specific period are few.”

3. Comment:
Please explain in the methods section how you did cluster the satisfaction variable (from 5 to binary), only in the results section you do that.
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. We have explained how we clustered the satisfaction variable (from 5 to binary) in the methods section.

4. Comment:
Some of the results you just mentioned the variable of interest was related to the outcome, satisfaction, but you do not say positively or negatively.
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. In the revised manuscript, we have indicated that working hours and work pressure were negatively related to job satisfaction, and
satisfaction on some work-related factors, including performance appraisal system, hospital management, compensation packages, and learning and training opportunities were positively related to the job satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county hospitals.

5. Comment:
In page 10, last paragraph, you mentioned a "previous study". Does it mean previous analysis or actually another study? If the later is true please cite this study.

Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. It means the previous analysis in this paper. We have re-write the sentence as “we analyzed the significantly related factors (P< 0.05) described in the previous analysis (Pearson chi-square test) by using the binary logistic regression method”.

6. Comment:
The paper now explores much more in-depth the independent variables. However, it would be good to have some type of explanation of why they were included, was any criteria (statistical or policy related) to include or exclude variables? On a related aspect, the survey included respondents from different counties and hospitals, did the author considered any variables that could assessed to county characteristics that could potentially affect the results? If so, were they considered in the analysis? How?

Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable.
1) Firstly, we chose age, position, professional title, years in professional working experience, and educational background as independent variables because these variables are sociodemographic characteristics of medical staff which may influence their job satisfaction.

Secondly, we chose variables about working situation including the number of hours spent at work everyday, and the degree of work stress as independent variables because of policy related criteria.

Thirdly, we chose variables about satisfaction on work-related factors including satisfaction on performance appraisal system, satisfaction on concern showed by leaders, satisfaction on hospital management, satisfaction on compensation packages, and satisfaction on learning and training opportunities as independent variables because of policy related criteria and the Minnesota
Satisfaction Questionnaire. Adapting the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and based on the content of public hospital reform program and actual situation of medical staff in pilot county hospitals in China, we include these variables about satisfaction on work-related factors.

Fourthly, we include all these variables mentioned above as independent variables also because of statistical criteria. All these independent variables are analyzed and proved to be the significantly related factors (P< 0.05) in the previous analysis (Pearson chi-square test).

2) The survey included respondents from different counties and hospitals. We selected the counties according to geographical locations and economic development levels in Hubei province, and chose a county-level hospital in each county. We controlled the differences of county characteristics. The economic, social and cultural development situations of the selected counties are at the same level. The potentially effect of county characteristics, if there is, will be little. Therefore, we didn’t consider any variables that could assessed to county characteristics that could potentially affect the results in this paper.

7. Comment:
One of the conclusions is related to salary levels. Although health workers reports that salary levels are insufficient, suggest that salary should be include may not be 100% true or feasible - would be good to consider, for example, whether salaries for health workers in this hospitals are below or above the average salary for other professional categories in China.

Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. Considering the accessibility to the data and statistics of medical staff members’ salaries in county-level hospitals in China, we add some information in the manuscript as follows: At present, the average annual salary of medical staff in county hospitals is basically the same as the average annual salary of urban workers in China. The income level of medical staff in county hospitals in China is very different from international situation.

8. Comment:
There are still some sentences that need to be edited and re-written.

Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. We have reviewed and edited the
manuscript, made some modifications and re-written some sentences.
Special thanks to you for your good comments.

Reviewer #2 (Reviewer: Gerard Schmets)
1. Comment:
The paper is much better but still need some improvement; it could be shortened (many repetitions; some sentences are copied in several paragraphs of the paper).
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. There were many repetitions in the old manuscript. We have deleted the repetitions in the revised manuscript and shortened the revision by about 1500 word count.

2. Comment:
In my opinion, the results and conclusions in the abstract could be improved. It is clear that staff in pilot hospitals works long hour and is overstress. But they are more satisfied. They don't know a lot about the reform, but much more than in non pilot hospitals. What are the recommendations? Then you could add several recommendations you do to government and administrators.
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. We have added several recommendations and make some improvement in the results and conclusions in the abstract. Special thanks to you for your good comments.

Reviewer #3(Reviewer: Mike Counte)
1. Comment:
The entire paper requires substantial editorial review (improve flow of sections, use basic principles of scientific writing); use of a very competent English language editor is strongly recommended
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. We have invited a very competent English language editor to help us and made substantial editorial review on the entire paper. We
have tried our best to revise this manuscript.

2. Comment:
The paper needs to be shortened and be more concise, current version is way too long.
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. We have deleted the repetitions in the revised manuscript and shortened the revision by about 1500 word count.

3. Comment:
Paginate pages
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and great helpful. We have paginated pages in the revised manuscript.

4. Comment:
Why are there so many independent variables? On what basis were they selected (rational for model)
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable.
Firstly, we chose age, position, professional title, years in professional working experience, and educational background as independent variables because these variables are sociodemographic characteristics of medical staff which may influence their job satisfaction.
Secondly, we chose variables about working situation including the number of hours spent at work everyday, and the degree of work stress as independent variables because of policy related criteria.
Thirdly, we chose variables about satisfaction on work-related factors including satisfaction on performance appraisal system, satisfaction on concern showed by leaders, satisfaction on hospital management, satisfaction on compensation packages, and satisfaction on learning and training opportunities as independent variables because of policy related criteria and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Adapting the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and based on the content of public hospital reform program and actual situation of medical staff in pilot county hospitals in China, we include these variables about satisfaction on work-related factors.
Fourthly, we include all these variables mentioned above as independent variables also because of statistical criteria. All these independent variables are analyzed and proved to be the significantly related factors (P< 0.05) in the previous analysis (Pearson chi-square test). Therefore, the selected independent variables are rational for model.

5. Comment:
Replicability of the study? Sources of internal and external bias?
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. Given that the study was conducted only in county-level hospitals of Hubei province and the questionnaires were self-administered, it is therefore possible that the respondents might have over-reported or under-reported their level of job satisfaction and satisfaction on work-related factors, understanding and perception of the reform. Hence, the findings of the study may not be generalized to medical staff working in other types of hospitals or in other areas in China. But the study method in this manuscript may have replicability.

6. Comment:
What are the major contributions of this study to the existing literature?
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. This study aimed to describe the medical staff members who have been participating in pilot county hospital reform in Hubei Province in terms of their current working situations and satisfaction. This study also aimed to assess the extent of the understanding and attitude of the medical staff toward the proposed reforms. Furthermore, this study was conducted to analyze the related factors according to the results. The discussion aimed to propose relevant programs that could be used to increase job satisfaction and active participation of medical staff in public hospital reform in China. One of The findings indicated that the influence on job satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county-level hospitals caused by sociodemographic characteristics in this study was weaker than that caused by working situation and satisfaction on work-related factors. This phenomenon could be attributed to great changes in the working situations of medical staff and work-related factors in pilot county hospitals in China as a result of the implementation of the health care reform and hospital reform. One of the results of our study indicated that the number of hours spent at work, work stress, and satisfaction on
performance appraisal system, hospital management, compensation packages, and learning and training opportunities strongly and significantly influenced the job satisfaction of medical staff in pilot county hospitals. These findings are similar with those in earlier studies on job satisfaction. All the findings of our study reflect the actual situation of working status, satisfaction and attitudes toward the reform of medical staff in pilot county hospitals in China in this specific period. However, as far as we know, studies on the same issues in China in this specific period are few. Issues in healthcare and public hospital reform in China are unique, but the lessons learned and challenges may provide useful guidelines, particularly for developing countries.

7. Comment:
Why was systemic health care reform important in China? What is its future?
Response:
What the Reviewer commented is very good and reasonable. The systemic health care reform in China is very important and the reasons are as follows. 1. The purposes of systemic health care reform in China are to reduce the residents’ economic burden for medical services, mitigate the difficulty in affordability and accessibility of medical service, and provide safe, effective, convenient, inexpensive health services for universal coverage. 2. The long-term goals and general framework of the reform are to establish a good healthcare system and a universal health security system; the short-term goals comprise five key reform aspects: expedite the introduction of a basic medical security system; initiate a national basic drugs system; improve the primary health care service system; promote the gradual equalization of basic public health services; and implement a pilot program of public hospital reform. However, Systemic health care reform is a global difficulty. Health care reform in China did not form a fixed pattern and also in the exploration and development. Health care reform in China will face many new difficulties, but it will try its best to solve them, and create a better healthcare system and a more universal health security system for national.
Special thanks to you for your good comments.