Reviewer's report

Title: What is the working status of medical staff in pilot county-level public hospitals and their cognition to the reform: A study of public hospital reform in Hubei province of China

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Reviewer: wim Van van lerberghe

Reviewer's report:

This is a paper on a subject of interest indeed. As the authors point out the pilot hospital reform is the most difficult component of China’s health reform programme. It is most relevant to assess the reaction and the perceptions of the health workers involved. Unfortunately the design of the study makes the results very difficult to interpret.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

This paper requires major revision to make it ready for re-review. Authors should

(i) include the results of the same survey among staff of hospitals not included in the pilot reform programme, so that there is some way of interpreting the results. In the absence of benchmarks or comparison with no-intervention hospitals, it is not possible to relate self-reported social status, expectations of pay, job satisfaction etc to the reform or indeed to attach meaning to the results. It would be particularly useful to see whether the perception and knowledge of the reform in the study sample is any different from that of health workers elsewhere.

(ii) be careful to distinguish between conclusions drawn from the data presented, and speculations about their interpretation. For example, the data do not provide any evidence to link stress and workload.

(iii) it may be useful, in order to get more out of the data available, to analyse “cognition of the reform” in function of the respondent characteristics (male/female, type of job etc). From that point of view the data are under-analysed.

- Minor Essential Revisions

Authors should be careful in their write up to distinguish between what goes in the different sections: intro (purpose, relevance), methods (including rationale for the choice of sample, response rates etc), results, and discussion with interpretation. In the latter it is important to distinguish between a discussion of what the data say and general observations on working conditions or the hospital reform programme.
The language requires some corrections and editing.

Expert statistician review is not a priority at this stage.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests