Reviewer’s report

Title: Nurse staffing in large general hospitals in China: An observational study

Version: 1 Date: 27 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Xu Liu

Reviewer's report:

Thanks for your revision. Please kindly consider the following comments.

1. There are still numerous grammatical errors throughout the paper.

2. Background: Necessary information about why you want to study NTP ratios in different departments and in different regions is lack. There is no introduction about large general hospitals in China. What do you mean by "some countries and regions… but a ratio is used for nurse staffing"?

3. Method: The procedure of data collection was still not clearly stated. References are needed when you introduce tertiary hospitals in China. Patients who have more complex conditions do not necessarily have more serious adverse events. Your argument (page 5, line 40-46) is untenable. What do you mean by "geographic information"? Why did you survey the number of beds? I am still confused about how did you collect the data on August 28, 2017, at 10 am and 10 pm? Also, why did you choose the time points as 10 am and 10 pm? What's the difference between "large general hospitals" and "tertiary hospitals"? Reference about "California method" is needed (page 6, line 12-17). What do you mean by "number of beds in the daytime and nighttime"? The introduction about regions in China should be moved to background section. Also, you may need to state why you want to know the NTP ratios in different regions in China? What do you want to do after you know the difference?
4. Results: You said that "4,732 of which were excluded because they were outside the scope of departments included in this study", if so, these departments are ineligible and should be excluded at the very beginning when you invited the departments. Why 3 hospitals were absent from 671 hospitals? What do you mean by comparing the number of departments from different regions? They are absolutely "decreased from eastern to western region" because you have 303 hospitals in the eastern regions versus 175 in the western regions. Don't know why you want to compare the NTP ratios between day and night time. Please see table 3 (p=0.012&lt;0.05) and then check if you made a mistake by saying "no significant difference was observed across regions" (page 9, line 33-35).

5. Discussion: Necessary references were still absence in the discussion part. It seems that you post your point of views too much without strong backing evidence. It's inappropriate to say "The number of patients per nurse of nighttime is nearly three times that of daytime, which may cause adverse effects for patients." Do you have strong evidence on this point? Do you mean that the number of patients per nurse of nighttime should be the same with the number of daytime in order to reduce adverse events? The main reason why the NTP ratios are different between daytime and nighttime is the difference on workloads, however, you did not concentrate on the workloads. Also, please consider the workloads when you compare the nighttime NTP ratios between hospitals in China and the other countries (page 12, line 6-12). On page 10, line 51-60, I don't think it is necessary to explain why ICUs have the highest NTP ratio because people can understand this common sense. Please reconsider the first limitation because you have already compared the NTP ratios of different departments, which having different types of patients. The second limitation is not clear to me.

6. Conclusion: Please check if you made a mistake by saying "large general hospitals in large general hospitals of China" (Page 13, line 27). It is inappropriate to say "…were found in different regions and departments, which may bring safety hazards to patients" and "The quality of care at night plays an important role in patient safety"(line 36-39) because you did not measure "safety hazards" in your study. Also, "The phenomenon of ……, which cannot effectively evaluate the workload of nurses" is not a conclusion.

7. There are a lot of mistakes in the format of the references.
Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal