Reviewer's report

Title: Hepatitis C virus-related policy-making in Iran: a stakeholder and social network analysis

Version: 0 Date: 28 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Elizabeth Alvarez

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors,

Thank you for this interesting and relevant article. Please see the following suggestions:

There were no page numbers given, so comments are by section.

1) Background - Giving background on how health policy is made in Iran would be helpful for readers. Who has policy authority? What is the process, who writes policy, who votes on policy, who implements and oversees policy implementation, funding, is it centralized or decentralized?

2) Methods - Are you using a theoretical basis for this framework on interests? Did interest, position, power and influence come from an established framework or did it come from the data?

3) Methods - Length of interviews and interviewed participants are results - please move from methods

4) Methods - How many people collected and analyzed data? (Who performed the interviews, who analyzed the data, how were these standardized if more than 1 person?) The author's contributions states this, but this should also be listed in the methods section.

5) Methods - Under SNA, I recommend to briefly describe terms including "degree centrality" "closeness centrality" "betweenness centrality" and "eigenvector centralities"

6) Methods - was the 5 point scoring system (low, low-medium, medium, medium-high, high) used in the SNA analysis? Please clarify.
7) Results - How many documents were reviewed?

8) Results - It is not clear how political and government agencies are divided - what differentiates these from each other? Furthermore, Table 1 shows 13 governmental agencies, but the results section states 16. I thought the governmental agencies and political groups had been combined, but political groups were then listed separately. Please clarify.

9) Results - please spell out the names of each group the first time used in the paper and list the organizations alphabetically in the abbreviations section

10) Results - again, it would be helpful to know where the interest, position, power and influence framework comes from as a theory or whether this comes from the data.

11) Results - Please double check your article to ensure congruence with your data tables. For example, the paper states "PPC also play a relatively high role in patients' treatment" but it is listed as "low" on table 2. Other such areas were noted. It is also helpful to provide more information as to why these are low or high (e.g., "Prisoners, as one of the most high-risk groups for HCV, have made the SPSCMO authorities interested in harm reduction programs....") Please add more rationales / clarity for other interest groups to be in the high/low categories. Aka, more details on the mechanisms of influence. Having the background of how policies are made would help clarify this (e.g., Parliament vs. the Ministry).

12) Results - again, not sure what went into the SNA analysis. Adding this to the methods will be helpful.

13) Results - "Based on SNA-related items, the MOHME has the highest rank for HCV-related policies in Iran" What does this mean in practical terms? Are they the ones who write and enforce and fund health policies?

14) Results - "Based on these findings, stakeholders like social medica, news websites and Islamic republic of Iran broadcasting (IRIB) are the most centralized..." What does this mean in practical terms? Are these state-run agencies? Are they censored by government? If so, by whom specifically? A policy network discussion would be helpful.

15) Discussion - "Discussions and different standpoints concerning the development and implementation of healthcare policies can be a challenge, even though negotiations can
mitigate such contrasts…" Background would be helpful to understand the types of different standpoints and positioning of these different groups.

16) Discussion - "Through political dialogue, these weaknesses can be somewhat reduced" I don't feel I have enough understanding of the political processes to judge this and there has been no explanation to support this.

17) Discussion - "Moreover, due to the limited financial resources and economic difficulties….all financial resources for the treatment of patients are not provided." Is this stating that no one in Iran is being treated currently for Hep C? Please clarify.

18) Discussion - "…because of some cultural problems associated with HCV…" No background provided on this, what are the "cultural problems"?

19) Discussion - "The centrality of stakeholders such as social media, news websites and IRIB…” Are these state-directed or society-directed? See point #14

20) Discussion - "Consultation with all stakeholders can help them design…." Help who? See points 1 and 13.

21) Discussion - Are there any research implications found from this study?

22) Conclusion - "All HCV policy-making and decisions should not be handled by the MOHME alone…” Is the MOHME the one who makes policy? This was never clarified earlier in the paper - see points 1, 13, and 20. Also, is this from the data or personal opinion?

23) Conclusion - "…so that policy-makers can have a more comprehensive understanding (recommend to add "of a health issue") and make better (recommend to change to "more informed") decisions.

24) Table 1 - What are "municipalities" in this context? Are they not part of government?

25) Table 2 - It would be helpful to sort this table in some way - I suggest by organization type, following Table 1, but it could be an algorithm from High to Low. It is hard to follow since it is not alphabetical, by organization or by findings right now.
Grammar/editorial points –

Needs grammar revisions throughout.

Thank you for the opportunity to review your manuscript. This is a very important topic area and will certainly serve as a template for others. I look forward to seeing your revised manuscript.

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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

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

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Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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