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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Does exam-targeted training help village doctors pass the certified (assistant) physician exam and improve their practical skills? A cross-sectional analysis of village doctors' perspectives in Changzhou in Eastern China

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Abstract

Background: Quality of health care needs to be improved in rural China. The Chinese government, based on the 1999 *Law on Physicians*, started implementing the *Rural Doctor Practice Regulation* in 2004 to increase the percentage of certified physicians among village doctors. Special exam-targeted training for rural doctors therefore was launched as a national initiative. This study examined these rural doctors' perceptions of whether that training helps them pass the exam and whether it improves their skills.

Methods: Three counties were selected from the 4 counties in Changzhou City in eastern China, and 844 village doctors were surveyed by a questionnaire in July 2012. Chi-square test and Fisher exact test were used to identify differences of attitudes about the exam and training between the rural doctors and certified (assistant) doctors. Longitudinal annual statistics (1980–2014) of village doctors were further analyzed.

Results: Eight hundred and forty-four village doctors were asked to participate, and 837 (99.17%) responded. Only 14.93% of the respondents had received physician (assistant) certification. Only 49.45% of the village doctors thought that the areas tested by the certification exam were closely related to the healthcare needs of rural populations. The majority (86.19%) felt that the training program was “very helpful” or “helpful” for preparing for the exam. More than half the village doctors (61.46%) attended the “weekly school”. The village doctors considered the most effective method of learning was “continuous training (40.36%)”. The majority of the rural doctors (89.91%) said they would be willing to participate in the training and 96.87% stated that they could afford to pay up to 2000 *yuan* for it.

(Continued on next page)

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