Reviewer's report

Title: General practices’ beliefs about effectiveness and intentions to recommend smoking cessation services: qualitative and quantitative studies

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Reviewer: Anja Schumann

Reviewer's report:

This paper examines beliefs (attitudes, positions) and intentions to recommend smoking cessation services in GPs, using data from 2 studies, one qualitative and the other quantitative. Beliefs under study are beliefs about effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, sufficient personalization, and attendance/utilization of two different smoking cessation services, NHS clinics vs. in-house specialized practice nurses. Results revealed beliefs about effectiveness and cost-effectiveness to be key predictors for intentions to recommend the smoking cessation services.

I like the rationale and methodological approach of the study and I wish to congratulate the authors on a comprehensive yet easy-to-read manuscript. The introduction nicely derives the study aims. The two portions of the manuscript, i.e., the qualitative and the quantitative study, clearly complement each other. The authors demonstrate thorough knowledge of the relevant research body.

Major compulsory comments:

Methods sections of both study 1 and study 2: The methods sections could use some re-organization to facilitate the flow of information. In the current manuscript, the sample sizes appear before the reader has any idea about the study procedures, thus it is hard to understand and evaluate eligibilities, response rates, and so on. Consider starting with stating the general aim of each study along with the general description of the design, then describing the procedure culminating in the final sample, then assessments (interview) and data analysis.

Path analysis in study 2:

1. I did not understand why the authors employed bootstrapping in the path analysis. Because of sample size considerations? 367 may be at the lower end of what is needed for path analysis, yet relatively simple models were estimated, thus an attempt should have been made to test models without bootstrapping.
2. The authors test direct effects of beliefs of intentions, which is fine. However, they also test indirect effects among the beliefs. No rationale or hypotheses are presented why and which indirect effects were specified. Specifically, why did the authors test ‘perceived effectiveness’ on ‘perceived cost-effectiveness’, but not ‘perceived cost-effectiveness’ on ‘perceived effectiveness’? Path coefficients would be identical, thus a clear rationale/hypothesis would be needed to specify directionality. Further, data is cross-sectional anyway, thus directionality cannot be tested.
3. Did the authors create a sum score of the two intention items for the path analysis?

Discretionary comments:

Discussion p.17, mix-up with previous manuscript?:
“GPs responding via the internet may be more or less favourable towards nicotine dependence medication”
“Furthermore this method should not affect the relationships between beliefs and intention to prescribe nicotine dependence medications”
Both sentences should presumably refer to “smoking cessation services” instead of “nicotine dependence medication”.
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.