Reviewer’s report

Title: Public awareness of cancer risk factors and its determinants in Morocco: A population-based cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 17 June 2013

Reviewer: Terry Slevin

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This is a worthwhile and useful paper that should in my view be published. Having an estimate of the level of understanding in the community of the status of various cancer risk factors is an important and helpful metric on which to build cancer prevention efforts in any population. And while there is clear evidence that knowledge of a cancer causing agent is often not sufficient to result in lower or no exposure to the agent, in many cases it is an important component of any effort to reduce of prevent exposure.

There is little data published in the peer reviewed literature on this question, particularly in low to middle income countries so publishing data form Morocco would be of some benefit.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Some justification of the risk factors examined would be of value. For example, it would be important to provide references for each of the factors listed in the 14. Specific concerns here relate to the nomination of Olive oil and green tea as proven means of preventing cancer, and some food colouring agents as a proven causative factor. I am unaware of any solid evidence linking olive oil as a proven preventive agent for cancer. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting green tea may be a preventive agent in cancer but this may not yet have reached the point of solid level one met analysis status. Similarly, while some study in animal models has been done on some food colourings as potential carcinogens, the authors should list an authoritative source and nominate specific food colouring agents they consider as proven carcinogens.

Also, what is the sample frame being used? By this I am asking how did the research team establish a sample frame? Specifically, was it 3000 randomly selected names of adults from the Moroccan an electoral role, the telephone directory? The response rate is extraordinarily high by modern standards.

The scoring system could be revised. If the research team reported those who responded “don’t know” separately from yes or no this would add more information for the reader.

The statement in the introduction that “However, knowledge of practices and risk factors associated with cancer has never been evaluated” may be true if the authors added “… in Morocco”. For example this study, while not in peer review journal, reported a similar study. “UICC population survey of cancer-related beliefs and behaviours. Preliminary findings: cancer-related beliefs and behaviors
of low-, middle-, and high-income countries.”  

Minor Essential Revisions
Some spelling errors exist in the tables (eg “femelle” in table 1 and 2, “slims” in table 3)

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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