Reviewer's report

Title: Current smoking behaviour among rural South African children: Ellisras Longitudinal Study

Version: 1 Date: 15 March 2011

Reviewer: Tibor Baska

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
- The title is inappropriate: study is not longitudinal but cross-sectional.
- The article in the present form contains only descriptive summarization of findings. However, data deserve much deeper analysis as a ground to argumentation in the discussion (without analyses, the conclusions regarding factors related to tobacco use are rather speculative)
- age range (from 11 to 18 years) is rather wide to interpret results as a whole – I suggest to divide it into subgroups to analyze them separately.
- results should be discussed in more complex context taking into consideration situation in other African countries (I suggest to use GYTS data) as well as general model of smoking evolution (Peto and Lopez, 1994).
- in practical implications, interventions focused on attitude change, direct and indirect advertisement, minor sales restrictions, pricing, smoke-free policy should be mentioned as the most powerful measures to decline tobacco use epidemics.

Minor Essential Revisions:
How was the cigarette smoking defined – should be stated in the Methods!
In the tables 1-3, only “yes” answers should be presented (negative answers implicitly emerge from them) – the results would be clearer
Fig. 1 and 2 – the cut-off level is not well presented (to which group belongs 8 years and 7 boxes ?)
Fig. 3 – percentage should be calculated only from current smokers to give together 100%.

English corrections necessarily needed.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.