Reviewer’s report

Title: The social context of smoking: A qualitative study comparing smokers of high versus low socioeconomic position.

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Reviewer: Livia Giordano

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Paul et al. reported the results of a qualitative study comparing smokers of high versus low socioeconomic position.

The study is interesting because it attempts to identify how the social context of smoking can influence perceptions and behaviours in these two different groups. Taking account of these differences could be useful in planning more tailored and efficient antismoking interventions such as social marketing campaigns, support for quit assistance and strategies for smoking regulation.

Compulsory revisions

Methods Section:

The sampling methodology is not clear. It is not obvious what the authors mean with ‘purposive’ sampling in this context and why they utilize indexes based only on geographical characteristics (SEIFA) and not on individual bases /such as the educational level. In my knowledge, these indexes express the average conditions of that particular area. Single person could not well represent that area if individual characteristics are not considered, moreover if the number of recruited persons is so small. The authors at page 6 (third row) speak about eligibility criteria without specifying what they mean. Later, at page 7 (rows 17-18) authors state that a group containing not appropriate participants has been replaced by a new one. Again, it is not clear the criteria used to define the recruitment appropriateness if a priori they required the participation of current smokers who had made a quit attempt within the last 12 months.

A more comprehensible description of the sampling and recruitment methodology should be useful to better understand the study design.

I am not a sociologist and my knowledge about focus group technique is limited. I wonder if to have too homogeneous focus groups (with persons belonging to the same gender, age group and social position) could have biased the outcomes. If no, the authors should better motivate their choices.

For a better understanding of the article, the authors should describe a little bit more the differences between Low and High socioeconomic positions.

Discretionary Revisions

Page 3, row 11: SES (socio-economic status) and SES (socio-economic position): is there a difference between the two indexes?
Page 3, row 6: Both men and women drop to 16.6% in 2007?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'