Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of parental smoking and family type on saliva cotinine in UK ethnic minority children: a cross sectional study.

Version: 1 Date: 28 August 2009

Reviewer: Raydel Valdes Salgado

Reviewer’s report:

The social determinants of exposure to secondhand smoke among ethnic minority children in western societies have received little attention, so this study is timely and might be of interest of advocates and researchers in the field of tobacco control. The statistical analysis is sound.

Minor Essential Revisions

1- There is too much information in Table 1 which makes it is difficult to understand. I suggest one table for describing the sample characteristics and another for presenting cotinine concentrations.

2- I recommend using “secondhand smoke” rather that “environmental tobacco smoke”, an expression preferred by the tobacco industry.

3- It is not totally clear whether smoking by other members of the family (beyond the mother/stepmother and the father/stepfather) is taken into account when defining smoking homes.

4- You found cotinine in children from non-smoking homes –what are possible explanations for this?

5- There is no mention in the paper of cotinine concentrations by gender, it might be particularly relevant in this culturally diverse sample of children.

6- I strongly recommend further discussion on the following issues:
Potential for selection bias: Children were told prior to the study that a saliva sample would be taken from them for the purpose of detecting cotinine and 30% of the participants did not provide enough saliva.

Misreport of smoking status: When there is increasing awareness about harmful effects of tobacco use, some children might be in conflict to declare that their parents smoke.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

I declare that I have no competing interests