Reviewer's report

Title: Community Pharmacists' Involvement in Smoking Cessation: Implementation of the National Smoking Cessation Guideline in Finland

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Reviewer: Maciej L Goniewicz

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GENERAL COMMENTS:

Kurko and colleagues report an interesting study about implementation of the national smoking cessation (SC) Guideline in community pharmacies in Finland. The implementation was measured by a nationwide mail survey among community pharmacy owners and staff pharmacies. Sample size of 1190 respondents was shown to be representative of the whole country. It is an important public health topic in the context of Finland and might be of international interest, especially for other European countries. The study focuses on familiarity of respondents with the SC Guideline. They showed that such familiarity was associated with respondents' perception of their personal SC skills and knowledge, customers' value of counseling, and regular use of a pocket card supporting SC. The report is well-written and results are clearly described, including statistical testing. More details should be provided in the methods section about the actual context of the situation in Finland. Specificity and generality of the findings should be discussed more in detail.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

1. In Methods, 'Context and study design', authors presented a context of Finnish healthcare system and community pharmacies. It is very crucial for this paper. However, there is a lack of information on patients' attitudes and perception of pharmaceutical care in Finland. Do the patients refer to their pharmacist for counseling? How often? Do they perceive pharmacists as reliable health professionals? Citing any data on this topic would give the reader a much wider context of the situation in Finland. If such data are missing, this limitation should be discussed.

2. In my opinion, more details should be given for the national SC Guideline. How is it organized? What are the critical components? How is it available to pharmacists? What 'non-pharmacological SC treatment' is recommended? All these information would be of special interest to readers from outside Finland.

3. One of the limitation of the study is that it was done in 2006. It means it was done almost 4 years ago. Has tobacco control policy changed since that time in Finland? Have any law or regulation been implemented since 2006? Any other significant factors that might bias findings? For example, after 2006 a new prescription drug has become available. Could this fact influence the results?
encourage authors to discuss this particular limitation of the study.

4. Although the study strictly refers to Finland, it would be good to know authors’ opinion about implementation of their findings outside their country. However, authors referred to some studies from European countries (UK ref. 5, Germany ref. 10), Australia (ref. 6), but they do not compare their findings. Do these findings differ? I and my colleagues did a study on pharmacists’ role in smoking cessation in Poland that has been recently published. Some findings are very similar but I found some interesting differences. Specificity of particular findings to Finland (maybe because of unique healthcare system) and generality of other findings should be discussed in the paper.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

None

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

1. In Discussion section, first and second paragraphs; authors wrote that: “approximately half of the pharmacists were familiar with guideline implementation”. It is very positive message. But it also means that more than a half of pharmacists were unfamiliar with it. I encourage authors, based on the results presented in this paper, to discuss possible solutions to improve the SC guideline implementation among pharmacists in Finland.

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

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