Reviewer’s report

Title: Is there a role for workplaces in reducing employees’ driving to work? Findings from a cross-sectional survey from inner-west Sydney, Australia

Version: 1 Date: 2 November 2009

Reviewer: Sandar Tin Tin

Reviewer’s report:

This paper examined the potential role of workplaces in changing employee’s travel to work behaviour. Generally, it is well written and is a good contribution to the important field of promoting transport-related physical activity (with consequent health, environmental and economic benefits).

It would be helpful if the authors could clarify the following issues.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract, Results

1. The authors state that:

“Having convenient public transport close to the workplace or home were also positively associated with active travel to work with AOR 0.17 (95% CI 0.09-0.31, P<0.0001) and AOR 0.50 (95% CI 0.28-0.90, P=0.02).”

However, the outcome measure in this study was “driving to work” and the AORs were provided for this outcome. The participants who did not use a car to travel to work could use an alternative travel mode apart from cycling, walking or using public transport. An example is using a motorcycle.

The sentence should be written as “Having convenient public transport close to the workplace or home were also negatively associated with driving to work….”

Results, Paragraph 4

2. The authors mention that:

“Other factors including age, language spoken at home and perception of neighbourhood safety appear to be less significant factors associated with driving to work.”

I am concerned about the use of the term “less significant”. All the abovementioned factors are significantly associated with driving to work at the 0.05 level. It may be better to state that “Other factors including age, language spoken at home and perception of neighbourhood safety have a weaker but significant association with driving to work.”

Table 2
3. It is confusing to see odds ratios and p-values in the current format in table 2. The odds ratios mentioned should be in the same line as the exposure group (as the control group’s odds ratio is always 1).

For example, for the variable “workplace encourages active travel”, the unadjusted odds ratio of the “don’t agree” group is 1 and that of the “agree” group is 0.35 (0.24, 0.49).

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract, Methods

4. Please replace “they lived or work in a safe place” with either “they live or work.....” or “they lived or worked.....”.

Introduction, Paragraph 2

5. Please provide a reference for “Over 10 million people are employed in full or part-time work in Australia.”

Methods, Study participants

6. The authors mentioned that the response rate of the survey was 61%. Were there any differences between those who responded and those who did not (e.g., in terms of sociodemographic status)?

Methods, Analysis

7. Would it be better to categorise some demographic variables, for example, age, distance to work, into more than 2 levels (rather than yes/no)?

Results, Paragraph 1

8. Participants’ perception of workplace encouraging active travel may vary widely (regardless of how and to what extent active transport measures have been implemented in their workplace). Some may have chosen “strongly agree” or “agree” options even if there is only one measure in place but others may not have done so. For example, 36% reported that their workplace had shower and changing facilities but only 19% perceived that their workplace encouraged active travel. Could the authors comment on this.

Results, Paragraph 2

9. Please insert “close” between “convenient public transport” and “to work or home”.

10. The adjusted p-value for the association between convenient public transport close to home and driving to work should be 0.02 as stated in Table 2.

Results, Paragraph 3
11. Please remove “a” from the sentence “…convenient parking near the workplace was a positively associated with driving to work.”

Table 2

12. Please check the p-value for the variable “can work flexible hours”. If the p-value in the table is correct (i.e., 0.07), this variable should be included in the multivariate model.

Discretionary Revisions

Introduction, Paragraph 3

13. Please would the authors elaborate on what specific benefits could be obtained through workplace policies/interventions targeting employees’ commuting behaviour?

Methods, Data collection and measures

14. For the question “My workplace encourages its employees to go to and from work by public transport, cycling and/or walking (active travel)”, some example measures (such as public transport ticket, bicycle parking, shower and changing facilities) should have been mentioned in the question. Some respondents, particularly car drivers, may not be aware of such measures and may have chosen “neither” or “disagree” options.

Methods, Analysis

15. It would be interesting to know how the distance to work was measured and to see the ROC curve used to calculate the cut-offs for distance to work.

Results, Paragraph 4

16. Could the authors include other important predictors of driving to work (e.g., household car ownership, children’s modes of travel to school) in the regression models?

**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.