Reviewer's report

Title: Emotional/behavioural problems and cigarette smoking in adolescence: findings of a Greek cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 13 November 2009

Reviewer: Carlotta Galeone

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting manuscript aiming to study the association between emotional/behavioural problems and cigarette smoking in Grecian adolescents. The study takes advantage from a large survey conducted during 2003 in various geographical sectors of Greece. The study is well designed, data are original and results are interesting. However, some major points should be considered before acceptance.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The section “Background” should be more developed, reporting results from other previous epidemiological studies. Please report quantitative estimates, e.g., OR and 95% CI, in order to quantify the problem.

More is needed to make this publication stand as a significant contribution to literature (e.g., the previous studies on this issue are scanty, this is a large survey, etc.).

2. In the section “Discussion” the problem of selection bias is not mentioned at all. Please consider that the response rate is 63%. Moreover, the major risk factors of emotional/behavioural problems, such as genetic factors, smoking habits during pregnancy of the mother etc., are not included in the discussion. Please, add a paragraph with an adequate discussion on these issues.

3. In the section “Discussion”, first paragraph, the author stated that “Cigarette smoking was related to increased risk for emotional/behavioural problems and the risk did not decrease after...”. Please, consider that with a cross-sectional study it is not possible to estimate a risk, but just to evaluate associations.

4. The English language should be improved.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Abstract – Methods: The percentage of girls (60.8% of 1,194 students) is not consistent with table 1 (60.8% of 1,030 students).

2. The term “interrelationship” should be replaced with “association”.

3. Background: 2nd paragraph, empirical studies or epidemiological studies?

4. Methods: The age of adolescents is between 11 and 18 years old, but in the tables the age reported is from 12 to 18 years old. Is it a mistake or all the adolescents aged 11 years did not answer to the survey? If all the adolescents...
aged 11 years did not answer, please discuss it as a selection bias.

5. Methods: Please, move the description of sample characteristics from the section “Methods” to the section “Results”.

6. Methods – Family socioeconomic status: Please, better describe the questions used to assess the family socioeconomic status.

7. Methods – Adolescents’ leisure time: Please, better specify “… and the recall period being 1 week”. Did you use a strategy in the study design of recall in order to improve the response rate?

8. Results: First paragraph: The sentence “Ten and two tenths percent of adolescents…” should be changed in “Of adolescents, 10.2%.....”

9. Results - Last paragraph: delete “independently” because in this sentence it is not used in a proper way, and at the end of the sentence add “also after adjustment for several selected covariates”

10. Results - Last paragraph: Please, report the 95% CI after the ORs.

11. Table 4: Please, in the footnote report the adjustment covariates used in the model.

12. Table 4: Please, specify that the ORs of Leisure time and SDQ total difficulties are in continuous and specify the measurement unit “for an increment of .....”

13. In table 4 and 5 the p-values did not add information to the readers (there are reported the 95% CIs). Please, delete them.

14. Table 5: The symbol of the footnote does not correspond to the OR (95% CI).

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

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

**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