Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors Associated With Commencing Smoking in 12-Year-Old Students in Catalonia (Spain): a cross-sectional population-based study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the revised version of our manuscript entitled “Factors Associated With Commencing Smoking in 12-Year-Old Students in Catalonia (Spain): a cross-sectional population-based study” (Manuscript ID 1400509144369000).

In the present revised manuscript, as Reviewers and Editor required we have made all the revisions suggested by them.

In the new version of our manuscript we have highlighted in pink the changes made in the text.

Point-by-point response to Reviewers’ comments and changes introduced in the revised manuscript are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Empar Valdivieso-López

(Corresponding author)
POINT-BY-POINT AUTHORS’ RESPONSE TO THE REVIEWER’S COMMENTS.

MS: 1400509144369000

Factors Associated With Commencing Smoking in 12-Year-Old Students in Catalonia (Spain): a cross-sectional population-based study
Empar Valdivieso, Cristina Rey, Marisa Barrera, Victoria Arija, Josep Basora, Josep R Marsal and Study Group TAB_ES

Associate Editor comments:
I just reread the paper. The author was not responsive to my comments and those of the reviewers. Even though two of us told him that transversal is not a word, he did not correct it. Two of us pointed out the problems with CO measurement and although he agreed with all of the points we brought up, no changes to the manuscript were made. One reviewer had multiple methodological questions and these were answered well in the letter, but few clarifications were made in the paper. I pointed out that the figures need more explanation but no changes were made there either.

Author’s response:
As pointed out in your feedback, we proceeded to add a paragraph in the text that clarifies the issue of CO measurements, and we have corrected the methodological questions in the paper.
Reviewer's report

Title: Factors Associated With Commencing Smoking in 12-Year-Old Students in Catalonia (Spain): a cross-sectional population-based study

Version: 2 Date: 24 August 2010

Reviewer: Joy Johnson

Reviewer's report:

1. The paper still needs a careful edit. There are many places in the manuscript where I cannot follow what is being communicated. I have listed a few examples below:

1a) In the abstract - what is meant by “first transversal section?” Is transversal a term for cross-sectional?

Authors’ response: We have corrected the error according to your indication:

In the abstract section: “This paper reports a cross-sectional study at the beginning of the 3-year follow-up community study TA_BES”.

1b) Also in the abstract – “smoker parent” should be “smoking parent”

Authors’ response: We agree with your comment. The paragraph is not well understood, so we will make the change. In the manuscript: “A smoking father does not produce alterations in the smoking behaviour of young people. However having a smoking mother or former smoking is a risk factor for boys and a protective factor for girls”.

1c) “A cross-sectional population-based study.” This is not a complete sentence.

Authors’ response: We agree, and we have corrected the error according to your indication: In the current version of our manuscript in the methods section says: “A cross-sectional population study was conducted. Data were collected at the beginning of the 3-year follow-up community study TA_BES (2007-2010) [11]. This study was recorded in Clinical Trials.gov. under number NCT01048489”.

1d) “The behaviour of friends has a major influence on adolescents for which reason in both sexes we detected a significant association with consumption in those students who declared that the majority of their friends smoked.” -- I cannot follow this sentence.

Authors’ response: according to your indication, we changed the sentence as following: “We detected a significant association with consumption of tobacco students who declared that the majority of their friends smoked”.

1e) “Having a sibling who smokes duplicates the risk.” This should be “doubles the risk.”

Authors’ response: We agree and according to your indication, we changed the text as the following: “Having a sibling who smokes doubles the risk.”

1f) “Lower prevalence of consumption in girls compared to boys at this age should be considered to better understand the factors and mechanisms which favour commencing smoking in young people and therefore be able to design better educational strategies.” I cannot follow this conclusion.

Authors’ response: We agree and according to your indication, we changed the text as the following: “We observed a lower prevalence of consumption in girls. This must be taking into account to design better educational strategies”.

2. I do not think the registration information regarding the trial belongs in the abstract.

Authors’ response: We agree. We proceed to eliminate it.

3.-The following sentences seem to contradict one another. “A smoker parent does not produce alterations in the smoking behavior of young people. However, being a smoker or former smoker is a risk factor for boys and a protective factor for girls”.

Authors’ response: We agree and according to your indication, we changed the text as the following: “A smoker parent does not produce alterations in the smoking behavior of young people. However, being a smoker or former smoker is a risk factor for boys and a protective factor for girls.”
Authors’ response: Sorry for the mistake. I should say first “father” and second “mother”, we proceed to change the text: “A smoking father does not produce alterations in the smoking behavior of young people. However having a smoking mother or former smoking is a risk factor for boys and a protective factor for girls”

4.-Regarding the Hollingshead Index- please indicate that you are capturing the socio-economic status of the parents. You currently state that “To determine the socio-economic status of the young people participating in the study the Hollingshead index [17] was used. “Also, how did you combine information of the mothers and fathers?

Authors’ response: Socioeconomic status was assessed by adapting the Hollingshead index (1975) which is based on work and educational level of parents.

Education was scored from 1 to 7. (1 - minimum score: who did not or had not finished their primary studies; to 7 - maximum score: graduates and post graduates.

The job is rated on a scale of 1 to 9 (1: housewife, temporary workers, to score 9: senior executives, politicians, big business owners and professionals.)

Hollingshead socio-economic status = Mother’s education *3 + Mother’s job*5) + (Father’s education*3 + Father’s job*5)/2

Socioeconomic status was recoded into a qualitative variable in 3 categories (high, medium and low).

5. Regarding my earlier request about the need for a theoretical basis for the study. What I was particular interested in was a rationales for the particular covariates that were included. On what basis were these variables selected?

Authors’ response: The selection of variables was based on several considerations: We based this selection on revised bibliography and also include those variables, which in the bivariate analysis showed statistically significant (p-value > 0.05). We also included those variables that appeared clinical relevance and were included in other studies.
6. Please include the details regarding the model testing procedures in the paper

**Authors’ response:** In order to adjust the possible effect of different sites, we used a mixed model. Random effects were introduced at the school level were fixed effects and student-level and middle level (middle socioeconomic level of the center and number of students in the middle). The strategy used was that described by Merlo and colleagues in these 4 references:


Was adjusted initially 'empty model' in order to estimate the variability associated with the center. Once proven the significance of the fixed effects were added to the student level. We used the statistical package MLwiN v2.20 developed by Dr. Goldstein and colleagues. [http://www.cmm.bristol.ac.uk/MLwiN/] in the Center for Multilevel Modelling, University of Bristol. For all the analysis considered a significant effect (p-value<0.05).
7. The statistical tests are still missing from the tables (i.e., chi-square statistic, t-test value etc...)

**Authors’ response** It contrasted the student variables between smokers and not smokers and between boys and girls using chi-square test. It was considered a significant effect if p-values were lower than 0.05. We added the contrast in table 1 and table 2.