Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 12 May 2010

Reviewer: Kimberly Horn

Reviewer's report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions

None. I found this paper well written, clear, and to the point. The research question is timely and of great importance, especially in countries where tobacco marketing is increasing. The analysis was well done and novel. I believe this paper will make a valuable contribution to the field as our knowledge of smoking transition in this age group is quite limited. I especially enjoyed reading the discussion and was pleased to read the very complete and informative "applied" approach.

2. Minor Essential Revisions

A few minor suggestions:

On p. 6, there is only mention of youth assent for participation. If parents provided written consent, please note. If not, please explain.

On p. 7, the instrument is described. However, there is no mention of psychometric properties, e.g., validity, reliability analyses. This information should be provided to increase support for the instrument.

On p. 9, the authors state that some schools dropped out or declined participation. It would be important to know if there were differences between those that dropped out and those that remained. Also, please indicate if there were important differences among those schools that remained. This is addressed briefly in the discussion section, but it would be useful to report any statistical examination of these differences in the results.

Also on p. 9, the study reveals some important gender differences in smokers and also among those who are at risk of becoming smokers. Please expand and speculate on the important gender differences (including those related to culture) in the discussion. Gender differences may have important implications for prevention and cessation programming.

Please clarify the use of CO verification among non smokers. Also, expand on why CO is positively correlated with risk of becoming a smoker.

3. Discretionary Revisions

None.
Overall, very interesting paper.

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:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future?

I have, within the past 5 years, served as a consultant to USA Pfizer, Inc.

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future?

No

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript? Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

No

4. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

No

5. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

While not a competing interest, I will disclose that I am the developer of the American Lung Association's adolescent smoking cessation program, Not On Tobacco.