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: 18 May 2010

Reviewer: Joy Johnson

Reviewer’s report:

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

The authors present the findings of an interesting study focussed the prevalence of tobacco use in Catalonia. They specifically focus on predictors of smoking and attitudes toward smoking in the future. A unique aspect of the study is the focus on 12 year olds. Often studies such as this focus on older students. The sample is large and representative which is a strength. There are however a number of aspects of the study that require strengthening and I outline these below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The theoretical basis for the study requires development. In particular there is no theoretical background provided in relation to the multilevel analysis.

2. On page 6 there is reference is made to “the prior study” please clarify what is meant by this.

3. The notion of inter-centre variability in not defined conceptually or operationally.

4. The survey was based on a survey developed in Maastricht what steps were made to ensure the valid translation into Spanish? The measurements used in the study require more information – a description of the items used would be helpful. The Hollingshead measure was used to measure social economic status - what evidence is there that this is a valid measure for youth?

5. Regarding data analysis it would be helpful to have more information about the model testing procedures. What procedures were used to find the “best model?”

6. On page 11 a protective factor in relation girls’ smoking is discussed. It is not clear what the formula in the brackets represents – please clarify.

7. The tables would benefit from the inclusion of the statistical tests.

8. Table 2 – the foot note suggests there are standard deviations – but none are reported.

9. Table 3 – please check the odds ratios and confidence intervals. The confidence interval related to perception that tobacco is detrimental to health does not capture the odds ratio.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The paper requires a careful edit. There are a number of awkward phrases and incomplete sentences. For example, “collated” is used when likely the appropriate term is “collected.” It is probably best not to use the term “diagnosis” when referring to “smoking status.”

2. I am not sure what is meant by “basal transversal section” I think this may be a translational issue and wonder if the authors are meaning baseline, cross-sectional data?

3. The abstract mentions the “controversy” related to parental smoking but provides no details.

4. In the conclusion mention is made of “cognitive” variables – but it is not clear what variables are being referred to.

**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:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.