Reviewer's report

Title: Determinants of smoking initiation among women in five European countries: a cross-sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2009

Reviewer: Nuno Lunet

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. In the methods section the authors should provide detailed information on how the oversampling of smokers was accomplished.
2. The distribution of age at smoking initiation is probably skewed and its overall figures are likely to be meaningless given the inclusion of women from different age-groups in the analysis. The authors should provide the necessary information to show that treating this variable as continuous was appropriate.
3. The authors should provide detailed information on the yielding of the surveys in each country and this issue should be thoroughly discussed.
4. I would not compute p values for trend when the exposure is defined by an ordinal variable.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The abstract should include more quantitative information on the results section and the way the objectives (“why European women begin smoking”) are defined is probably too ambitious.
2. The introduction is too extensive and lacks objectivity. The authors should make an effort to make clearer which is the potential of this study to produce new evidence and how a sample of women from different European countries may contribute to the accomplishment of the objectives.
3. It would be interesting to have information on the proportion of current smokers in table 1.
4. The n’s per category should also be provided in table 1.
5. The authors state that depression was associated with later smoking initiation. The statements regarding this association should be rephrased taking into account how “depression” was evaluated.
6. Please provide the criteria followed to define France as the reference category.
7. Regarding the reasons reported for smoking initiation, the category “other” represents a much larger proportion than many of the other reasons presented in detail. Both the criteria used to define these categories from an open question and to present these specific reasons should be provided.
Discretionary Revisions

1. Since the questionnaire format plays an important role in the results obtained in surveys it would be interesting to provide an English version of the questionnaire used as a supplementary file.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.