Reviewer's report

Title: Smoking cessation quitlines in Europe: matching services to callers' characteristics

Version: 2 Date: 21 August 2010

Reviewer: Mónica Perez-Rios

Reviewer's report:

Title: Smoking cessation quitlines in Europe: matching services to callers' characteristics

This is an interesting manuscript trying to determine whether quitlines are matched smokers' characteristics.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes it is

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Yes, but some changes need to be done

3. Are the data sound?
   Yes, they are

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes, although some major changes are needed

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Yes, but some changes are needed

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes but some changes are needed

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract:

Methods: This section is scarce and the first sentence is a result. Please modify
it.

Results: Try to avoid authors’ expectations, reflected in sentences as: “In line with our expectations”, “……which was unexcepted. ”, and so on.

Conclusion: “Heaviness of smoking” at this point is unclear, please modify the sentence.

Introduction

This section is very long and the structure is not correct, for example the objective of the study is in the middle of the section: please move it to the last paragraph and modify it taking into consideration the objectives pointed all along the introduction, for instance: being referred by a health professional.

Too many references in this section: 22 of a total of 28 references. No more than 14 references should appear in this section.

The information related to counseling and motivational interview should be summarized.

Last paragraph, first page of the introduction: Why are the authors including it? None important information is given. Please delete it.

Caller’s characteristics must be redefined, especially stage of change and self-referred or referred by a health professional.

Last line in this section is unclear.

Methods

Setting paragraph, line 4: “By including data from several……” Please, delete it.

Setting paragraph, line 5: “Finding that are consistent…” Please, delete it.

Setting paragraph, line 6: “We made sure……” Please delete it.

Quitlines characteristics (number of lines working, call free, workers (number and characteristics) in the quitline..)) and quitlines integration in the national health system in the included countries should be given.

Respondents and procedure

Some results are included in the methods section; please remove from the last line in the first page “A total of 8,761 callers…” to the end of this section.

Please explain better the origin of the 3,585 participants in the study. A figure probably clarifies these numbers: very difficult to understand throughout the text.

In this section one question arise: Was it the first call to the quitline? Was it recorded in the questionnaire? This important information has to be acknowledged.

Questionnaire: Key information is omitted, for instance categories of the education level are not clear, explain it better.

Statistical analysis:

When authors included “seven types of services”, are they speaking about the 7 countries included in the study? This sentence is unclear.

Results:
Try to avoid SD, when mean age is described please change it by range and quartiles, in the number of cigarettes please include the 95% confidence interval, in mean length of calls description use percentiles.

Table 1: An error is present in HSI score, authors have used in the table a score>3 and it must be modified to<3 or =>4.

Type of services: the authors point that “Pharmacotherapy information was given to 43.6% of the respondents” but they also state that “In 7.3% of ALL calls this was related to…..”. When trying to analyze the overall information it seems that 80% of all calls receive pharmacotherapy information, or for media one caller receive information o two drugs? Please explain these data.

Results: Try to avoid authors´ expectations, reflected in sentences as: “In line with our expectations”, “……which was unexpeceted.”, and so on. Identify and delete these sentences

Discussion:

Discussion must be modified taking into account some important questions such as: NL and IT data are quite different in comparison to other countries in relation to the type of services provided by the quitline; why? Explain deeper what happens in other quitlines and also try to explain the differences among quitlines taking into account countries characteristics.

Limitations of the study must include the difficulty related to country comparison based on different socio-economic status, different tobacco prevalence, differences in tobacco epidemic and so on.

**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:**

No