Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of the Chinese new warning labels on knowledge, cigarette giving and quitting

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Reviewer: Alison Clements

Reviewer’s report:

This is interesting and topical research with the clearly stated aim to assess the impact on knowledge, gift giving and smoking cessation, of health warnings on cigarette packets within a community with a high prevalence of smoking.

However, several problems with the paper make the paper unsuitable for publication in its present form.

Clarity

I realise the difficulties in translation – the presentation in English is mainly very impressive, but some of the subtleties of language need to be more carefully considered. Some of the tenses need attention, several words are not easily understood eg. in the background ‘… first public health treat’, avoid abbreviations, but of greater importance are the difficulties I had in several places of understanding what the research questions were aiming to establish.

Within the methods section, the first question within the perceived impact of cigarette giving paragraph is not clear. Presumably it is trying to determine if the labels would make someone not want to give those cigarettes as a gift? Similarly for question 3, is it trying to determine which label is most likely to affect someone wanting to give, or not wanting to give those cigarettes?

Table 1 - spelling & numerical errors. It would be helpful on all tables to have both numbers and percentages included.

Methods Section

Additional information within the methods section is needed – how many participants were approached to reach the 876 interviewed. Why was selection stopped at that number? The inclusion and exclusion criteria need to be clearly stated. How long had participants stopped smoking for to be considered non-smokers? Were their reasons for having stopped smoking been recorded? How long did the interviews take? Was there a reward for participation? Was reading ability assessed as well as school level attainment?

Results Section

Within the results section it became unclear whether the questions were trying to determine what the health issues related to smoking were, or whether they were trying to determine firstly whether participants knew that smoking was harmful,
and then specifically what that harm was. This needs to be very clear.

Was a baseline level of knowledge assessed prior to being shown the labels? If after reading label A, 18.2% knew that cigarettes were harmful, yet this increased to 31.2% for label B and only difference was the size of the warnings, how can this be accounted for? Similarly with the increased understanding of the related harms from smoking.

What was the perceived benefit of asking non-smokers what would affect their smoking cessation?

State the differences in the text clearly - ie more likely to quit with C-F rather than simply there is a significant difference between the impact of B to C-F.

Discussion

The first statement that the new warning had a low effect on knowledge of harm of smoking, giving and quitting is not supported by the data shown in Table 2. A significant difference in knowledge between labels A and B is reported, though not for the dimensions of giving and quitting.

It would be interesting to include a discussion of how to account for the difference in awareness of perceived harms of smoking between labels A and B (as comments above in the results section).

If awareness of specific harms from labels C-F was greater – is this simply because the harms were stated on the packet?

Overall an interesting paper, demonstrating both important cultural differences between China and Europe eg. “giving cigarettes is giving harm”, and research-based proposals for increasing awareness of smoking harms, reducing gift giving and incentives for cessation. With considerable re-working this paper could have greater impact.

**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:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'