Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and factors associated with difficulty and intention to quit smoking in Switzerland

Version: 1 Date: 7 December 2010

Reviewer: John Yarnell

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Major comments

1) We acknowledge that it is difficult to obtain high response rate in population samples, particularly when clinic attendance is required, as in this case. However, in this study, about 60% of the eligible population were not seen and it would be useful to have as much information as possible on this large group of non-responders. For example, in the study population was the proportion and distribution of smokers similar to that found in previous surveys? Was the proportion of non-Swiss smokers under-represented? If the study sample included mainly smokers who had some interest in health then this report may focus on an unrepresentative group of smokers who show a higher levels of intention to quit than those in the general population. Some comments on this issue would be helpful.

2) The issue of elderly smokers could be explored in more detail. For example, the decline in smoking prevalence with age is well recognised but the relatively low rates of intention to quit in the elderly age group does not appear to have been widely reported previously. Some possible reasons for this could be suggested and also whether this age group should be a particular target for health promotion and cessation measures.

Minor points

1) If there are sufficient numbers it could be useful to examine the non-cigarette smokers separately since, in men, this group may represent smokers in the process of transition to non-smoking, with higher than average levels of intention to quit.

2) In table 1 for both men and women in the group serving apprenticeships appeared to have a particularly high prevalence of smoking. Some discussion of this phenomenon may be useful to the reader.

3) In other studies non-employment seems to confer a higher prevalence of smoking. This could be mentioned in the discussion (if confirmed in this population) as a particular target group for health promotion or smoking cessation.